

AN EXAMPLE OF EVANGELISM FOR CHURCH GROWTH
AND REVITALIZATION IN THE CHRISTIAN
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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The context is Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church located in Conyers Georgia. The problem is some untrained clergy and laity see evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle. My project will create training sessions for dialogue between clergy and laity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. This research will assist in the formation of evangelism that connects to the spiritual disciplines to be practiced. The anticipated outcome is to help the Christian Methodist Church use evangelism to share faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although the thought of my project was singular a project of this magnitude would not be possible without human partnerships and collaborations. The project itself has others who invested time, talent, and resources to make this project a reality. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Vance P. Ross, Dr. Lillian C. Smith, and Dr. Rudy Rasmus for their mentorship through this process; Dr. Joni S. Sancken guiding hand as a faculty member, and Dr. Lloyd Walters who entered the United Theology Seminary at the same time as a classmate on this journey. I also acknowledge my cohorts in the journey.

I also wish to acknowledge and appreciate my professional associates who pushed me, their suggestions and comments were impeccable to the success of this project. Among them are Dr. Darryl Wesley, Dr. Ore Spragin, Dr. Jamie Capers and Dr. Thomas Slater. A special “thank you” is extended to Bishop Marshall Gilmore who planted the seed of pursuing a doctorate with his words “medical doctors go to medical school; lawyers go to law school and preachers go to seminary.” Those words had a lasting impact on my life and ministry. An extra special “thank you” to Dr. Lori Spears whose support and words help to keep me focused on the finish line.

I am so grateful to my family, my supportive wife Tiffany for her patience, understanding and love; my children Alexis, Ashton, La Quethia, Asia, Jeffery and Deon for your sacrifice and patience. The clergy and laity of The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church for your prayers, financial support, and dedication.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, beginning with the late Leon C. Moore, Sr. who taught me the value of prayer and education. My mom Vivian Parks who reminds me to keep a level head, and my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends which helped to shape the importance of family.

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A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify. Who gave his son my soul to save and fit it for the sky! To serve this present age, my calling to full fill. O may it all powers gage to do my masters will. Help me to watch and pray. And on thy self-rely, by faith assured I will obey. For I shall never die.

—Charles Wesley

INTRODUCTION

There are many forms of evangelism, ask anyone and they will give you a definition. Yet, as believers, we should follow the Jesus model of evangelism and mission. Jesus trained the disciples to carry on the work when he would not be around. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church must carry on that work in the body of Christ. How can we help untrained clergy and laity who see evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle gaining a clear understanding of evangelism?

In this project, creative ways were considered for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in a non-church society asking, “Why hasn’t Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church grown? In my project, I will go through the process of answering that question and offering a real solution. So, the new question becomes, “Why has the Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church grown? I have selected the following theme statement, “An Example of Evangelism for Church Growth, and Revitalization in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.”

This work is an embodiment of experience, research, and application. I have taken the opportunity to show how the church can evangelize by addressing untrained clergy and laity who see evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle. When clergy and laity are trained, and taught evangelism principles, evangelism will become a part of their ordinary lifestyle. It is important to note many major denominations have not considered the social trend of declining churches found in

society as it relates to evangelism. However, due to the pandemic changing the way worship is viewed, with platforms like Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook. Covid-19 has brought challenges but opportunities as well. Evangelism looks different during the pandemic, but the church can still evangelize. The reach of the church is not limited to the walls of the church, but it can be a global reach, if necessary. From my context, we have not met in over a year in the building. However, we are still able to meet and worship God virtually. The experience and passion created years ago are still driving me to create better evangelism experiences.

My research has shown the need for effective evangelism and faith sharing moments. It is my hope you find my project to be relevant for many years to come. Although, adjustments might be needed because of the context, some principles remain despite the context and can be used in many localities.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is no different from many mainline denominations. When evangelism training and teaching have not been the focus, pastors and laity are left to find out what works for themselves, albeit sometimes through trial and error. The errors can lead to a misunderstanding, misapplication, and damage to the faith of God's people. My goal is to help people understand evangelism is not separate from spiritual disciplines. Evangelism is a spiritual discipline to be practice along with the likes of prayer, reading the Bible, meditation, fasting, and other spiritual practices. If we practice sharing our faith regularly, faith sharing will be a part of who we are opposed to something we do. Therefore, my project addressing the issue of untrained clergy and laity is critical to the life of Pleasant Hill CME.

Clergy and laity are lacking the formation and a real way to share a faith that grows the church. Faith sharing is the call of the local church and evangelism cannot sit as some event waiting to be used when it is convenient. Evangelism must become a part of the lives of believers in my context. It is important to mention the foundation for the project is prayer Jesus took prayer retreats to refresh and refuel himself for the work of ministry.

Chapter two focused on the biblical perspective. I choose to look at 2 Chronicles 7:12-14 and Luke 8:4-16 both passages are relevant to my context. Although written at a different time and to different people, the principles of the text apply to my context. Solomon's prayer request (2 Chronicles 7:12-14) was answered by God allowing Solomon to rebuild the Temple. Prayer allows for dialogue between God and humanity; therefore, we may understand what God is saying to us as believers. Prayer can help us understand the work God has called us to and affirm our understanding of what God has said to us. The work we seek to do is God's work. To do God's work, we must talk to God.

In the Gospel of Luke (Luke 8:4-16), Jesus shares the parable and shows importance causing the crowd to hear, understanding, and respond. Jesus allowed his disciples to experience his Galilean ministry while he advanced and expanded the Kingdom of God. The church must return to a theology that helps people deal with their life experiences. Clergy and laity must understand the purpose of the church to seek out and reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and offer hope. To do this effective, clergy and laity must understand the need for evangelism. Evangelism can be the arm of

God in society seeking human participation reaching those who need Christ. It begins with a belief in God, and the practice of holistic evangelism.

Chapter three focused on the historical perspective of the research. Church history which has always played a key role in the life of the Christian church. Although often overlooked and discarded like an unwarranted part of theology, however its importance should not be overlooked but included in the study of the church. How could one rightfully study, read and write about the church without a Sankofa moment? The Christian church needs historians that will remind us to use history to preach and teach the Bible. In looking at the Azusa Street Revival, it will help the church understand the importance of evangelism. Pastors and laity who intentionally share their faith and believe in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit can change the world.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church must review its history for the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to maintain the mission of God. Church history should guide the modern-day church into effective evangelism while training the pastor and laity to share faith outcomes for the communities they serve.

Chapter four focused on the theological perspective. God called people from various places but, those who hear and accept the call enter a covenant with God. The people and the church belong to God. When this is understood we find meaning in our ability to approach evangelism through a theological lens. Theology gives insight to one of the oldest manuscripts in the world, the Bible. Theology for Christians shapes our views and purpose while aiding the believer on the faith journey. Pastor and laity must practice and learn the mission of the church and how it relates to their life and witness. What then is the purpose of the church in the communities they serve?

Chapter five focused on the interdisciplinary perspective. There are very few comparative disciplines that will offer a perfect match to the Bible. However, the principles in the Bible can be taught and shared. Additionally, many principles are transferable realizing that all things grow, so I looked at pedology as the comparative discipline. The social science itself may not fit the faith walk but the principles of growth from conception to death makes this discipline a good match for training and teaching pastors and laity to think of evangelism as a lifestyle as opposed to an event. The church is a living organism with many parts and the evangelism part has not been effective partly due to a lack of knowledge in effectively sharing faith in Jesus Christ.

Chapter six speaks to the data and work done in the field of evangelism from principles and practical faith sharing. To become most effective in evangelism the church must seek God in prayer and use the gifts of the body of Christ. Everyone does not have the same gift but collectively the church has everything it needs to grow. In addition, the participants were asked to use the experience of others to help formulate their evangelistic beliefs. Taking on the attitude of, if it is going to be, then it is up to me, in Jesus' name. Growth principles does not belong to a certain racial, social economical, educational or denomination group. Growth principles are transferable in many different disciplines and fields of study. Some water, others plant, but the church must understand God will provide the increase (1 Cor 3: 7-8). When God gives the vision, God is obligated to provide provision.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

My passion for ministry will help facilitate the success of this project. My ministry interest of evangelism was birthed in me from the failure of my home church (I say failure lightly), the problem of untrained clergy, and laity who may see evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle existed years ago. I grew up at the Fews Memorial CME in River Rouge, Michigan. One Sunday in August of 1978 at Fews, I heard the voice of God for myself clearly. It was a call to confirmation; the confirmation call comes from a structure of the piety of the procedure I was baptized as an infant. So, when I heard the call to salvation, I know that it was a deeper call into the ministry, which I came to understand later in life and ministry.

The pastor, at the time, was Rev. William H. Crenshaw. He came from St. Louis to pastor Fews. This was his first year as my pastor I remember the experience like it was today. The Holy Spirit moved upon the altar of my heart. I was sitting in the back of the church with the other youth. This was not our time to sing so we would always go sit in the back of the church. When he preached it was as if he was talking directly to me. It was as if he was looking directly at me. When he extended the invitation, I immediately came down the aisle. The strangest thing began to happen, I began to cry profusely. The aisle seemed longer and longer. I made it to the front of the church still crying. My mom

came to join me and then my grandmother. They wiped my eyes, but the more they wiped the more tears continued to flow.

Rev. Crenshaw waited and he came down from the pulpit to greet me. I gave him my name and told him why I came down. I came to accept Christ into my life; however, I was baptized as an infant, so he accepted my confession as a statement of my faith publicly. God became real to me, individually. However, little did I know that was the beginning of a wayward life experience. I think Rev. Crenshaw, my mom, grandmother, and I missed what God was doing in my life at that moment. The response of the congregation at that time was applause, I received handshakes and pats on the back, congratulatory remarks and even “I am so proud of you.” However, from that point forward no one showed me how to live for Christ. No one disciplined me. No one followed up with me. No one checked on me but, I knew I enjoyed what I felt. I think it was the presence of God. My world now being shaped by society and what is new and fascinating to me because the church missed the opportunity to lead me into discipleship and formation.

I began moving into becoming a young man even with the absence of my father in the home. My dad who accepted his call to ministry in the same church during the early seventies. However, because of politics and favoritism he was not able to move forward in his ministry. My dad ended up leaving the church and stopped preaching. I remember the blessings of the Lord falling on our family and we did not want for anything but once he stopped preaching many problems came to the forefront. Our home was falling into spiritual decay, it is like the church had no room for our family.

The church was not there to help put the pieces of this new experience in life together for me, or to help me understand what was happening in a clear way. However, with the grace of God I made it. I promised myself when I can lead people, I would teach and train people what it meant to live a life for Christ. My context will not reflect the missed opportunities of Fews Memorial CME Church experiences, but it will become an example of evangelism within the walls of the church that will extend outside the walls of the church as well.

Many people seek a spiritual connection in some manner, and I was seeking one in the body of Christ as Fews. However, at times the leader may only offer the handshakes and pats on the back as was my case when I came down the aisle. It is important to my project that I offer more than the church offered me, at that time. I needed much more of a holistic formation in discipleship.

Creating dialogue and a safe place for persons to grow in Christ through interpersonal relationships that can help churches and communities grow. My passion for evangelism for church planting, church revitalization, church growth and expansion can guide my project. I believe God has been preparing me to lead in evangelism for an exceedingly long. Preparing me to help those in the community of faith to live on purpose a life that will bring God glory. Where we can overcome sin by the love of God in Jesus sharing evangelism through shared experience, preaching, and testimony.

My project will be supported by my biblical passage Luke 8: 1-15. Jesus teaches an example of growth with the parable of Sower. First, the Lukan writer records the actions of Jesus and the interaction with the community while teaching a greater understanding of God's Word. When God's word has been shared, we must hold on to it.

In a small glimpse, the text can be a type of church or group who may not understand the message of the parable.

This parable is one of my core messages to help grow the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. My role is to help Pleasant Hill CME Church, prayerfully with my guidance and reflection on the ancestor's hard work and dedication, and build and grow the church, the community, and other partnering institutions by faith. My project will produce a harvest that is modeled after the parable of the Sower. I am looking for good-fruit or in layman's terms ministry.

It is vitally important that several generations are represented in evangelism. The local church must begin to impact the communities they are a part of and not to allow anything less than diversity, the church should mirror the community in which we serve. Often this is not the case, partially because of the lack knowledge and evangelism training material in the local church. The best efforts in evangelism does not try to duplicate, but to create space for authentic evangelism.

One of the early fathers of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Joseph A. Johnson, Jr., was the thirty-fourth Bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. He writes in his book *Local Church and Lay Evangelism* he states, that "The local Church must be a training institution in which the members are taught basic facts about the polity, the doctrines and the history of the church. The local church must be witnessing institution in that its members must constantly feel the need and urge to tell others about the good news of God."¹ Bishop Johnson argument made in 1976 shows the need for intentionality and urgency for the CME church regarding evangelism. If the

¹ Joseph A. Johnson, *The Local Church and Lay Evangelism* (Shreveport, LA: Fourth Episcopal District Press, 1972), iii.

local church would have taken the call of laity to live the purpose of evangelism, seriously maybe the church could have grown. Of course, much of the work will be my research of the context and the methods. I will use for collecting data, which at this time is scattered especially from a historical lens. As I started in my contextual analysis, my project's methods will employ five key tenets and five core principles that will drive evangelism in the Pleasant Hill CME church to achieve growth. This growth will be made evident in the areas of church planting, church revitalization and expansion.

The five key tenets are demonstration of love, prayer, education, transparency-faith sharing and experience of success and failure. The five core principles are honesty, integrity, accountability, mobilization and building strong relationships. Each of these tenets and principles are found within the biblical text, Luke 8: 1-15, the parable of the Sower for the Lukan source. This text outlines the example of ministry for my context. Given the foundation of community, Jesus began to go around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching (v.1). Jesus' example was different in his context but in my current context others have used his teaching to grow Pleasant Hill and the surrounding community. I will use my project as one of the examples for evangelism in the areas of evangelism for church growth, and from this growth the by-product could be church revitalization and expansion in Pleasant Hill. The text accentuates diversity using women and men who were a part of the evangelistic movement but, who were able to fund the work. As I stated before the tenets and this text are critical to the success of my project.

My formation in the faith was sporadic but my hunger for God's ways were greater than the lack of training. However, for several years, I left the church from the

age of sixteen to twenty-four years. For me these were my wilderness years. These years helped me develop my faith in ways that the church would not. Although, I labeled them wilderness years, the experience was unbelievably valuable to me. I now understand what those who are not a part of the organism called the church are experiencing. I speak and see from others point of views and this helps me be relatable to the needs and concerns of others. The church at times has a xenophobia toward persons who may not respond, act, or conduct themselves in a manner that is different from mainstream religion. However, from my lenses and now I see for the lenses of the ministry, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all who believe. Combining the formation of my faith and my context creates for me the opportunity to share my faith in amazingly simple forms. By using my resources, time, and talent and what God gave as hands, feet, mouth, and heart of the evangelistic moment, it is not lost but shared.

Why does the CME church need trained clergy and laity? We can no longer be relevant in the community we serve if evangelism is not a lived experience. When we remain in the four walls of the church, we fail to consider what the Great Commission call us to do, which is to go.

It is important for Pleasant Hill to see evangelism as a part of the spiritual discipline and not an event that happens at certain times throughout the year. These and many more questions have crossed my mind, and the minds of others within the denomination. There is no cookie cutter answer, or one size fit all mode for evangelism. I believe the project can help other churches. According to our material and workbook *Studying Congregation: A New Handbook* edited by Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carrol Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, "Population changes present constraints

and opportunities for congregations but do not determine destinies. Although congregations are made up of people, the link between who lives in the community and who attends a congregation is a complex one. When new people arrive, they might be “just the kind of people for your congregation; alternatively, they may be ‘not your sort.’”²

It has often been said that it is more in the person than the land. When considering the context of Georgia, North and evangelism for church growth and the outcomes of church revitalization, church growth and expansion, population growth and decline can be a factor of many different reasons. One of the strongest reasons is leadership, the pastor and his or her leadership team miss the opportunities like it was in my case. The team must seize opportunities, know the lay of the land and offer programs and ministries that will meet the needs of the community. In the book *Renovate or Die* Bob Farr says, “The Church isn’t going anywhere if the pastor is not willing to lead. We were not ordained to follow; pastors are ordained to lead a congregation. You were not ordained and sent so that you can follow that congregation wherever it wants to go.”³ Leaders, lead. It is important to note that education and training is critical to the growth of my context. Farr’s words about the working parts of the church begins with the pastor. The pastor must hear from the Lord in prayer and respond accordingly to lead God’s people.

The larger community must be in partnership with the church and vice-versa. The church can no longer operate as a connectional church from an autonomist mindset.

² Nancy T. Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 55.

³ Bob Farr, *Renovate or Die: Ten Ways to Focus Your Church on Mission* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 17.

The pastor must create a space for authentic conversation to take place. Many times, those who are not a part of a congregation but, live in the community might see those who drive into their neighborhood as visitors. Visitors who do not invest in the neighborhood. The community see those who live and shop in the neighborhood as part of the community. However, those in the congregation may not be aware of those in the community and become locked within the walls of their own churches and attract no one. The non-churched see who we are, the non-churched hear what we say. If the community is to grow, the church of Christ must be present and available to those who live in the community. The congregation must see the need for spending money in the area where sowing the word is shared.

As I explained earlier in the chapter that my world was being shaped by society whether good or not so good. The church was not in my life, nor was I in the church but the church effected my life even by its silence. My experiences can help to eliminate such a negative impact on the lives of others. I understand again, this work will not be accomplished in a vacuum or the work of isolation, but it must become a team effort. The workshop will help leaders in the local congregation to do just that. The chosen text for my project and context speaks to this in Luke 8:4-15. Looking at verse eleven, Jesus gives the explanation of the parable. The seed is the word of God, our task is to share God's word in a practical way for the current times and conditions of the congregation. Pleasant Hill can truly become the example of effective evangelism in the Christian Methodist Episcopal.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has not seen significant church growth since its inception. According to Bishop Othal Hawthorn Lakey the forty-fourth Bishop

of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in his book *The History of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* says,

In spite of the difficulties, in the first twenty years as a separate and independent church, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church tripled its membership, selected three additional bishops, who proved to be men of outstanding competence and commitment, expanding the scope of the annual conference operations, establishing two viable educational enterprises, and became a predominate Black church in the South.⁴

Considering the church was organized during the time when Negroes were slaves and one growth period happened during segregation and the Civil Rights Movement; it appears the church's best years came from struggle and oppression. Now, the church finds itself positioned to grow again. In my spiritual journey God has placed me in many other communities to lead, serve and make them better. It was also to be a voice for those who will not speak up. A voice for those who are afraid to speak up, a voice for those who are oppressed, suppressed, and depressed. To provide the essence of liberation, salvation, and education. I find comfort in service to others and with this service it is my hope, God will be glorified.

I approach my project in confidence. Also understanding that no great work for God can be done without prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. The ability to pray must be connected to evangelism and the growth of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church or any great work for God. The Jesus example of prayer gives insight to our conversation with God and the ability of God to answer our prayers.

Jesus often took time to pray. Jesus took prayer retreats to refresh, restore, and renew himself daily. When considering my project for the Pleasant Hill CME prayer must

⁴ Othall Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the CME Church* (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 1996), 196.

be a high priority. Not only for myself but for those who have a gift of prayer join our voices one accord.

Alfred Tennyson said, “Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of: Wherefore, let thy voice, rise like a fountain for me night and day.”⁵ Individual prayer is equally important to my project. My passion for prayer was created by God using my dad. My dad was a local preacher at Few’s Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church a power prayer warrior. I remember he would be in his room praying, singing, and worshipping God. I would look through the cracked door and experience firsthand his prayer life. We would pray together as a family; we even had an altar, chancel rail set up for pray in our house. There were good times before the spiritual decay and the failure of leadership at Few’s. It was refreshing to hear him in his room talking to God in prayer, and God answering the prayers of my dad. He taught and instructed me and my sister to pray drawing near to God. Yes, we were prepared at an early age to pray. My prayer life continued to evolve as I practiced the spiritual disciplines of prayer.

Earlier in my ministry, God revealed the gift of evangelism on my life. I first recognized the gift in high school. With this gift came great responsibility in so much that sharing God and the message of God became a lifestyle. As a much younger preacher, I felt the call to plant and start a church, but the support of those around me was negative. I was going to leave the CME church. Yes, this church I was born into, yes, the church that nurtured me. The church became a hindrance to me as well the politics and favoritism were unbearable at that time. Just as it was in the seventies when my dad was a local

⁵ Alfred Tennyson, *The Poetic Works of Alfred Tennyson* (Norwalk, TN: Easton Press, 1994), 58.

preacher, the spirit of politics and those who benefited from favoritism was very present. Although I did not leave, I still felt the tug on my heart strings to a greater work in the kingdom of God concerning the church. Now I have this opportunity and it appears that God has brought things around full circle. However, I have a greater direction now and I believe greater insight to the process. So, my experience with my project will become a tremendous help.

As my experience will help aide a push for my doctoral project and understanding no great work is accomplished without prayer being the catalyst. Likewise, the Holy Spirit must be present to guide the work. My experience with the Holy Spirt helps me to understand the essential part of growth and transformation. I could argue the reason why the mission of God was slow moving prior to the birth and death of Christ was the absence of the Holy Spirit. For the first century church saw great evangelistic movements when the Holy Spirit moved amid God's people in the book of Acts. One cannot deny the move of church growth that produced, church revitalization, and church expansion.

Examples in the book of Acts the Apostles. For example, Acts 2:41-47 states:

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.⁶

The text gives an account of four things that can be learned within the context. Some of the lessons learned were 1. The believers were devoted to the teaching of the apostles

⁶ Biblical citations within the document are found in the New International Version unless otherwise noted, Acts 2:41-47.

about Jesus. 2. They created time and space for authentic fellowship. 3. They found time to share a meal together. 4. They had opportunities for corporate prayer.

These four examples created the foundation for the future of the church no gimmicks, tricks, and schemes were not used. The scripture shows how the context and project will benefit by sharing the Word of the Lord. Recognizing the important role the Holy Spirit plays in the over-all development, discovery, implantation, execution and follow-up, with adjustments it is critically important to the success of the project and the lives of those who will be impacted by my project.

I seek a greater understanding of my context of Pleasant Hill CME Church. My project will increase the viable and visible presence of the Christian Methodist Episcopal church in my community. My project will create an example of evangelism for ministry in the church that will be used in the areas of church growth and revitalization.

Although discipleship is not the primary focus of my project, it can be assumed that discipleship along with evangelism encompasses church growth, and revitalization, which could lead to church expansion. Although discipleship must be taught, one of the most important pieces of my project might be church planting. According to Rev. Dr. Roz Picardo in his book *Embrace: A Church Plant that Broke All the Rules*. Picardo says that “The Christian culture has Romanized church planting to the point that it has done disservice to aspiring planters. It becomes way too easy to forget that not all plants make it. I think this sets up younger people, especially, with assumptions that church planting efforts are successful.”⁷

⁷ Rosiario Picardo, *Embrace: A Church Plant that Broke All the Rules* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2011), 29.

Although evangelism for church planting is essential and important to my project the manifestation of the plant could perceivably go beyond the scope of my project? In addition, I must recognize that not all plants will be successful. This statement keeps me grounded and humble at the same time. It becomes vitally important to seek God for the work God intends for me to do before, during and after my time at United Theological Seminary. In addition to that work, I see with faith, church revitalization within my context although Pleasant Hill is not in a rural community, many of our churches are in rural communities. The communities still have a valid role to assert themselves and offer the liberating gospel to those who may not find the gospel relevant anymore. To revitalize these local congregations will give credence to the community. These local communities have chosen to die a slow death and not be intentional about revitalization because of their location. A revitalized church can be a place of love, hope, and promise just as the redemptive message of Jesus offers love, hope, and promise. So, the local congregations who have chosen to die a slow death will not do so on my watch.

Another component of my project I hope to see is church growth. If Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is going to be an example of what evangelism looks like my project could determine the impact in the entire Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. I believe it will become my responsibility to passionately share with those the different tenets which include the demonstration of love, prayer, education, transparency-faith sharing and experience of success and failure. The five core principles are honesty, integrity, accountability, mobilization and building strong relationships.

The expectation of my project for evangelism for church growth must be considered through church plants and church revitalization. However, to recognize the

need for intergeneration ministries that meets the need of the church and surrounding community that partners with the community will bring forth relevant ministry that will allow for the use of our time, talent, and resources to grow the church. It is important that my project examine ways we do not misrepresent the gifts and graces of ministry, God has given us. We must come up with new and creative ways for implementing an attitude of change. I would like the church to have a community endorsement with other local congregations. For example, sometimes Sundays are the only time we use some of our churches. We must be willing to become unselfish and offer our building, playgrounds, and parking lots to the greater community that we serve to grow the church. This can create better relationships and help the church become more evangelistic and missional minded that will impact the community and dispel the stereotypes of the local church.

Contextual Shift Covid-19

We are now experiencing a time in the church that we have not seen before. There have been similarities like the pandemic named the Spanish Flu in the early 1900s, but the church must seize the opportunity of the new day with virtual worship. We have been in a new normal since March of 2020 with the Norval coronavirus know as Covid-19. This virus has caused a pandemic and a shifting in the world and my context.

The virus has challenged the church to restructure its worship experiences. The normal worship experience no longer exists in many cases. Over the last few months, the phrases “shelter in place and social distancing” has been introduce to all of us. Some caught on quickly while others were slow to understanding but, we arrived at a place of acceptance of this new normal. Rather we like it or not, the Christian Methodist

Episcopal Church was forced to change. Many churches were caught off guard and scrambling to keep the normal, even though we were not ready for change. The body of Christ has a responsibility to community and each other. The new normal has not been defined, yet! In many cases the church has not seen the need to be proactive instead of reactive.

The virtual church does not welcome untrained clergy due to social platforms and the ability to swipe to the next preacher, worship experience and event. Although the social interaction difficult for most many clergypersons was exposed. Exposed because of lack and sound biblical teaching which includes evangelism. Preaching to empty pews in makeshift studios became the new normal. Although the doors for many churches have been closed since mid-March 2020. We have a unique opportunity as pastors and laity to look at innovative ways to grow the local church. Many pastors are in a strange place with live streaming, Zoom, YouTube, Duo, and other social media platforms. These platforms have become our new meeting places, gathering places, and sacred places of worship.

Yet to grow the church, the pastor cannot do so alone. No, the pastor or leader who understands our current climate also understands the power of teamwork. The work of evangelism in the church during a pandemic must be intentional. Evangelism methods will not allow pastors to be caught off guard. Pastors should not allow themselves to be haphazard about the work of evangelism. With the development of various worship options, the church can now use drive-in, parking lot, in-person, and multiple sites. Many people have options. So, my project must grapple with the question of how to effectively teach evangelism during a pandemic.

Conclusion

I have gone to great length to discuss some of my efforts to bring my experience and the context together to produce a project of systemic change in North Georgia, and more specifically the Pleasant Hill CME church. My chosen text, context and experience will produce a quality project. Just to summarize again the text Luke 8:4-10, however the following is a portion of the pericope that speaks to me and my context:

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, “though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand’ (Lk. 8:4-10).

These seeds that are reflected in the scripture mentioned as the word of God. These seeds are expected to take root where some seed did, while others did not. I contend that it is possible for that all seed took root however, some seed took root differently. In my group *Rooted: Church Planting and Church Revitalization in Our Diverse World*, we are challenged to rethink what ministry looks like with the stamp of our creative change. My text was chosen because it encompasses a holistic approach to evangelism and the rooted theme. The example of what evangelism looks like in the areas of church planting, church revitalization, church growth and church expansion.

It is important to take note that the project has several subjects to include prayer, church growth, and revitalization. Although there are several subjects, all the material will assist in the development of the project. There will be additional steps of

implementation after the completion of the degree. This project will serve the people in the North, Georgia region at Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. It will allow for all parts moving independently, yet collectively. The work of my project will help the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church establish the need for effective evangelism. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is not growing due to lack of training for clergy and lay. But, If clergy and laity were trained and instructed in the discipline of evangelism, the Church will grow.

The CME Church has ignored the declining of church growth. As a result, the church has become stagnant and declining during the current times. This decline has not happened overnight. The church is over 150 years old, however, it has not taken the call of evangelism seriously. My experience has helped me come to this conclusion.

The Fewes Memorial CME did not teach me how to effectively share my faith in God. Yet, it is my hope that once my project has been completed the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church will grow. The growth starts with well-trained clergy and laity who understand the importance of faith sharing to build personal and corporate relationships. It may be possible that the greatest question within the CME church could be. Who should evangelize? The “who” often overlooks the urgent need to move the church into becoming an evangelism epicenter where there is no fear of those outside the walls of the church.

When will Pleasant Hill CME understand the power of personal and corporate evangelism? Personal evangelism belongs to the individual and the responsibility to share their faith in the most simplistic form. Sharing of one’s faith is not difficult to accomplish when someone practices evangelism as a spiritual discipline. The local church has a

responsibility to share the faith of the body of Christ. However, the members in the congregation must be taught beginning with the pastor. The pastor must become contagious with an evangelism spirit even if evangelism is not a strong gift of the pastor.

Laity also have a key role to lead in the evangelism culture of the local church. This culture will compel others to come, even in the virtual context. Evangelism as faith sharing must look different because these are different days. Different because of Covid-19, civil unrest and racism which has brought change in the church. The church has been forced to go outside the four walls of the brick and mortar. However, we cannot go out and evangelize like we did inside the walls of the church.

The intrinsic work of evangelism will manifest itself at Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and its members once training and teaching is applied, so the next little boy, girl, adult will not have a similar experience like I had at Fews Memorial Christian Episcopal Church. Now, I have come to a place where I can assist in the formation of God's people at Pleasant Hill CME.

With this formation, I found my project will consider what John Wesley called for in one of his sermons "The Circumcision of the Heart." In reflection, the church did not teach, train, or help me. Wesley says, "At the same time we are convinced that we are not sufficient of ourselves to help ourselves; that without the Spirit of God we can do nothing but add sin to sin that he alone 'worketh in us' by his almighty power either to will or do that which is good."⁸

The Spirit moved in my life on August of 1978, I recognized the presence of God, but the congregation did not. I say they did not because I was left without formation and a

⁸ Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 25.

real way to share a faith that I felt but could not explain. The parallel of Wesley sin adding to sin seems to fit the experience at that time although I knew nothing of his sermon. It became a lived experience for me at a critical time in my life. Faith sharing is the call of the local church. Evangelism cannot sit as some event waiting to be used when it is convenient. Evangelism must become a part of the lives of Christians. Yes, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has failed in some but, not all areas of evangelism and faith sharing that can produce church growth through evangelism. It is my hope and prayer that my project will do just that. With intentional teaching and training in evangelism the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church will grow.

My project will address the contributing factors of untrained clergy and laity who may see evangelism as an event. It is sad but, true as I stated earlier The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has ignored the overall trend of declining churches in America.

A pew research article shows the decline which states “17% of Americans say they never attend religious services, up from 11% a decade ago. Similarly, the decline in regular churchgoing is attributable to the shrinking share of Americans who say they attend religious services at least once a week, which was 37% in 2009 and now stands at 31%.”⁹ The Christian Methodist Episcopal church has seen its share of decline as well. However, another challenge to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is the coronavirus. It is important to address the problem of untrained clergy and laity who may see evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle. I will

⁹ Gregory A. Smith, “In U.S. Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” Pew Research, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

explain to them the purpose of being intentional about evangelism even during a pandemic.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter will deal with the biblical implication of evangelism from two 2 Chronicles 7:12-16 and Luke 8:4-18 for my project in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The proposed example can help begin a dialogue in practical ways to address and developed a plan of evangelism for church growth.

This project is focused why Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal has not developed a plan of evangelism for church growth? The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has ignored the overall trend of declining churches in Northern Georgia to this present day. To be more specific, the smaller context of the CME church in Georgia the Pleasant Hill CME Church has ignored the trend of declining churches. This project is intended to bring leaders from the denomination to dialogue about the impact of community development from a team approach. Also bringing together corporations, business, and community leaders together to discuss and evaluate a potential plan for the community empowerment. The project will assist the congregation to become aware of community needs and participate in the action of advocacy which could strengthen the faith and business community. Clergy and laity have not been able to effectively evangelize because of inadequate training material and training. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church must take a serious look at prayer and faith sharing as the catalyst to move the church forward while enhancing and promoting community growth.

Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible tells the story of the children of Israel, God's chosen nation. Israel, however, had wins and losses woven in the context of their historical account and biblical record. Solomon, the third king of Israel, sought to build a temple wherein God's presence would reside. 2 Chronicles portrays a conversation between God and King Solomon that resulted in Solomon's divine mandate to construct a temple.

Following a prayer, the divine voice speaks to Solomon. 2 Chronicles 7:12-16 (NKJV) states:

Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place. For now, I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually (2 Chron. 7:12-16).

Raymond Dillard suggests, "Solomon's prayer and God's response form the center of the authors Solomon narrative; The Chronicle will remain through the rest of his history concerned that God does indeed keep his promise to answer with favor the prayers and repentance of his people."¹

The lens of prayer is needed to help my project to reexamine what God is calling us to do. Just as Dillard suggests that God is a promise keeper in Solomon's day, surely the same God is a promise keeper in modern times as well. Solomon was granted permission to build the temple of the Lord. As illustrated by Solomon's relationship with the Lord, prayer was central to advancing Israel's capacity for worship.

¹ Raymond Dillard, *World Biblical Commentary: 2 Chronicle* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishers, 2015), 59.

Building from this example, my project will develop leaders who are not afraid of seeking God in prayer. It is important to seek God's direction to move people from wilderness experiences to faith development. My project will develop leaders who can develop a plan of evangelism while developing a plan for faith sharing. This could lead to church growth that will produce, church, expansion, and church planting. God's people needed a place to worship their God and God was about to do a new thing in the life of God's people. The book of Chronicles preserves Israel's history and records the action, movement, and decisions of God. Historically, King David wanted to build the Temple however, God would not allow him to build.

God's appearance to Solomon by night suggests God sought a one-on-one moment with Solomon. This time was Solomon's prayer and fellowship time to speak and hear what God and during this time approval of the Temple occurred. Prayer means nothing unless God hears. The Chronicler seems to suggest that God has heard Solomon's prayer. The prayer of Solomon was requested many years before God decided to answer. Solomon was given the initial green light to build however, the effects of his prayer was not sanctioned by God until God's readiness to commit. When God made the choice to dwell in the Temple, it was an enormous opportunity for the children of Israel to have a greater level of structure daily. These are the people who once disowned God and wanted a king of their own. Now God decides to approve the Temple and changes the narrative of the history of Israel. This is the first of its kind (albeit modeled after previous tabernacles), place to meet God and for God meet God's people.

With these decisions that God made, it did several things for God's people. God had not been with God's people like this since the days of creation. The temple worship provides six reasons of importance. The temple represents the meeting place for God and

God's people in community. The presence of the temple provided a sense of peace and power. The temple's communal aspect gives hope to all people. The temple is a resource for training for God's people. The temple was a place for authentic worship. The temple was the place for sacrifice unto God. Solomon could build but only God could consecrate the temple with God presence.

God declared "I have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice," The building was Solomon's work, done in the power and inspiration of the Lord. The consecration of the building was God's work. Solomon could build a building, but only God could hallow it with God's presence. "It's to be a house of prayer and 'house of sacrifice'... This combination of the temple's functions is striking and is one of the several indications in 2 Chronicles 5-7 that prayer and sacrifice are to be understood as 'two sides of the same coin.'"² "By presenting the temple as a place where right sacrifice and prayer could be accepted, an opening was being provided to exchange Israel's present bleak circumstances for a more positive future. It offered an opportunity to change the course of Israel's history."³

Jim Selman also suggests the temple is a house of prayer first then sacrifice. The chronicler writes just the opposite in the scripture. In verse twelve, "Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice." The ordering of the sacrifice and prayer is important. The sacrifice gives the people the opportunity for God to hear them because if they hold anything in their heart God will not hear them. The sacrifice is most

² Jim Selman, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 74.

³ Selman, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 86.

important in temple worship. The sacrifice gives the people access to the presence of God within the confines of the hollowed walls. The sacrifice is for the remission of sins. Once sin becomes a non-issue because of the sacrifice, then God is ready to hear from the people according to the Chronicler. The assertiveness of God in the pericope helps Israel understand the power of God to make them aware of the truth. Although the temple has been built God's power extends beyond the walls. The text gives credence to that power in verse thirteen, "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people." Although one may try to confine God into a box, God is omnipotent. God assures Solomon of this power referring to what God has done in the past. Solomon may have heard the stories of God's power to command the reign and not to cease. For example, the plagues on the Egyptians.

The children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, but God allowed them to possess the land of Canaan. God reminded Solomon of God's power although Solomon was instructed, to build God could not be contained in a building.

Verse fourteen opens with a conditional covenant. This conditional covenant was based on the word of God. God has decided to except this house of worship and to move the people forward if they come into covenant agreement and do their part. God decided that God had a role in lives of the people and their process, with the ability to be a blessing to the people. Israel must do several things so that God may restore them, bless them, and heal them. The word if signifies a higher possibility from the chronicle' point of view. The text swiftly shifts to the responsibility of God's people. Verse fourteen says if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their

sin and heal their land. God declared that these were his people and being God's people came with gigantic responsibility. Israel is God's people because God says so.

The soul that is in constant communication with God will be able to effectively do the work of God. Solomon's challenge was getting the people to return to the basics and returning to the basics for Israel meant that it was important to spend time with God! Although God will accept the house of worship, the house of worship does not limit God's reach for all of God's people. So, a lifestyle of prayer is the single most important spiritual discipline God wants for the children of Israel in this text. For the covenant to work, God's appearance to Solomon suggests that they must be humble, pray but also seek his face. What does it mean to seek the face of God in the text?

The chronicler uses the word "seek," however in the Hebrew context of the word it means to "pursue" or "desire". The seeking of God, however, should lead the children of Israel into the presence of God. In a way, they have longed to experience God's presence. The Temple was going to provide for the children of Israel; but not only should the Temple be the only place to seek God. Before the acceptance and the building of the Temple, God's people had the invisible institution. God was always present, but Israel has a choice of visiting or not visiting the Temple. That before God sought the people out to be in an intimate and intentional relationship but, now the people will have to seek the presence of God in a place where the Spirit of the Lord dwells.

The latter part of verse fourteen stated that it was necessary to turn from wickedness which meets the spiritual, physical, and mental needs of the various communities. The turning from wickedness is a necessary in part of the text. God's love is with Israel; but wickedness is before the eyes of the Lord. This conditional covenant

between God and Solomon calls for a response. The request is for the people to humble themselves, pray unto God, seek God's face, and then turn from their own desires and sin. Then God would be ready to bless the Temple with God's presence. This covenant is conditional. The wickedness before the eyes of God causes God to show the people God's displeasure with them. The turning from their wicked ways must become and intentional restraint from wickedness thought, word, and deed. Proverbs 15:3 reminds us "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Wickedness before God can keep us from enjoying the presence of God. In a very real sense to turn from wickedness is a call for repentance not only in the minds and heart of the people; but word is for a lifestyle change a new direction.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church needs a new direction the church must become open to the ideals of change in the millennial generation for evangelism. Turning from our wicked ways could help the church move forward. Turning from our wicked ways in a real sense helps us to see ourselves as God see's us. The CME church has committed itself to the it's following Mission and Vision Statement. The churches vision statement states: "The vision of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is to be a transforming church for Jesus the Christ within a changing world."⁴ "The mission of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is to be disciples of Jesus the Christ by serving individuals, communities and the world as the representative, loving presence of God and as witnesses to God's salvation and grace."⁵

⁴ Roderick Lewis, *Book of Discipline: Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* (Memphis, TN: CME Publishing House, 2018), 3.

⁵ Lewis, *Book of Discipline*, 83.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal church cannot become the church God is calling for and what Solomon see unless, we are intentional about turning from our wicked ways. The answers found in the next passage of scripture are recorded in the verse fourteen, “Then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” God simply promises to hear the prayer of his humble, prayerful, seeking, repentant people. He will bring forgiveness to His people and healing to their land. “These expressions are best understood as four facets of one attitude, that sinners should seek God himself in humble repentance, rather than four separate steps on a long road to forgiveness.”⁶

Solomon’s request to build the temple was granted and God decided God was going to dwell within the temple. So, here is the outcome of the conditional covenant that God entered with God’s people. A response from God, the people prayers will be heard, but not only heard but acted upon. They will hear from heaven, the place where God resides, heaven the place of blessings and not curses. This declaration from God by the Chronicler is related to the people’s need for God’s presence. For the people have humbled themselves, prayer has gone forth, and seeking the face of God and turned from their wicked ways now, they will hear from heaven. Following the roadmap in this pericope my context will lead to the same or similar results.

In verse fifteen, the Chronicler suggest that God will not be an idle God in the temple but a continually active God that will see and hear the prayers of the people. God promises to pay special attention to the prayers offered from the temple which Solomon was allowed to build. According to Ralph Klein, “This promissory answer, introduced by

⁶ Lewis, *Book of Discipline*, 7.

the transitional word “now,” which indicates a new thought, is a direct response to Solomon’s prayer (2 Chron. 6:40). God has decided to grant Solomon’s request.”⁷

Some writers throughout the Hebrew and New Testament writings attach human anatomy to a God who is Spirit. Likewise, those who speak of God in the natural sense do the same thing. God’s anatomy or lack thereof is not a sign of the human condition and weakness humanity experiences. How can we have the audacity to attach humanity to God. In a real sense when we do so we then become limited in the ability of God’s saving power. For instance, when we the creation, give God human body members like, eyes, ears, feet, hands, arms, and a few others ascribed parts that we give to the creator. We have the image of God; but God does not have the image of humanity. Moreover, the prayer can benefit from such a reminder of God’s attentiveness in prayer. God’s attentiveness in the temple and in my context is very real and truly relevant however, what if God is not concerned about the work, we say we are doing for God?

Yet, verse sixteen says that God has now chosen the temple and sanctified the temple. God choosing of the temple in verse twelve is different from God choosing of the temple in verse sixteen. In verse twelve, God chooses the place for God self. In verse sixteen God chooses the temple and then sanctified the temple. It is a place of consecration, a place set apart, a place that will be specifically used for God’s business. Even though God declares says, the chronicler that God’s eyes and heart will be in that place perpetually forever. Klein says, “Not only will Yahweh’s name be in the temple signaling his presence, but his eyes will be there to see the needs of his people.”⁸ 2

⁷ Ralph W. Klein and Paul D. Hanson, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 10.

⁸ Klein and Hanson, *2 Chronicles*, 11.

Chronicles 7:12-16 gives clear and precise directions on the conditional covenant that God shared with God's people. Along similar lines, the New Testament pericope already mentioned helps bring a greater understanding.

New Testament

The author of Luke pens this Gospel to the Gentiles to capture Jesus' compassion, hope, and love for God's people. In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as a friend to the sinner. Much of Jesus' work was framed around the poor. According to Richard Horsley, "The first century in Palestine witnessed the rise and fall on many popular movements. None of which survived the death of their founders."⁹ The movement of Jesus the Christ, however, enjoyed expansion even after the death of its founder. It was through the proof of the death, burial and resurrection of the Christ that many have come to believe in the power of God. It is possible that the prayer life of Jesus helps to sustain the movement's success.

Exegesis

Luke 8:4-15 can transform the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and it states:

And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: "A Sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that 'Seeing they may

⁹ Richard A. Horsley, *A People's History of Christianity, Christian Origins* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 47.

not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience (Lk. 8:4-15 NKJV).

This parable in the gospel of Luke focus on the word of God. Joseph Fitzmyer says, “The parables that Luke retains give examples of the “preaching” mentioned in Luke 8:1 but the emphasis is much more on the word of God.”¹⁰ This parable serves as an introduction to evangelism, church growth and church revitalization.

When a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke a parable. Notice the people gathered to hear Jesus but, the backdrop for this text begins with verse one, Jesus is going through every city preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. This verse seems to capture the spirit of an evangelist holding a camp meeting in cities and villages sharing the good news of Christ.

Among the disciples are women that Luke calls by name Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means (Lk. 8:2-3 NIV). According to Sharon H. Ringe, Luke was very intentional in his writing about women being followers of Jesus. She writes, “Luke’s depiction of women must be placed alongside reconstruction of the early Christian movement it was truly egalitarian in its initial stages with women in position of

¹⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1982), 700.

leadership and authority.”¹¹ Jesus shows the importance of inclusion in evangelism efforts. The good news of God is for everyone who would believe. The message of inclusion of women in leadership is critical for the CME church.

Many leaders in the church are women. Luke’s Gospel gives women a voice like no other gospel. Although they are silent in the text, the presence of Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and many other women establish the importance of their voice. Jesus breaks tradition with this entourage which can be viewed as troublemakers. The importance of the parable brings into focus evangelism and the importance of my project. Luke’s connection with humanity makes his gospel much different from the other gospel’s writers. The voices that Luke uses make his writing inclusive in many aspects, not only the voices of women as leaders in the movement.

The voices of the boy Jesus in Luke 1:49, the voice of Jews, Samaritans, rulers and, servants alike. Even the prophetic voice of Jesus in the prediction of his death in Luke 9:21-22. Some voices are not heard by speaking but their presence in the text still speaks, maybe even louder than words.

Luke’s representation of silent voices allows the gospel to be preached by those in the Greco-Roman world who were considered oppressed and marginalized. It is not always the person in the foreground who is doing the greatest work. Many who occupy public positions could not sustain their place for one week without support from home! There is no gift which cannot be use in the service of Christ. Many of his greatest servants are in the background, unseen but essential to his cause.¹²

The text does not say where Jesus was currently located. It is possible that Jesus was in the Galilean countryside. More important than the location was the personality that

¹¹ Sharon H. Ringe, *Women’s Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 499.

¹² William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Louisville, KY: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 116.

attracted the crowd: Jesus was the reason people gathered. The people came looking for Jesus as he was sharing the good news of the gospel. Seeking out Jesus was important although the intentions of each person are not known.

Jesus begins to teach the parable (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning). Jesus begins to teach and share the wisdom of God in a relevant way. In verse five the reader finds “A Sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.” This pericope really connects with the context. The Sower in the text is skilled in his or her work as in their craft. To produce a harvest planting must be precise and intentional. The timing of the sowing is critical to the future of the crop to yield forth good fruit. To understand the emphasis of the Sower and the words of Christ in the text the master teacher Jesus takes his time to skillfully paint the picture that was relevant to that time. Although Jesus teaches that the explanation on the seed from the Sower was the word of God. One must consider the Sower is one who have prayed and heard from God about spreading the gospel of Jesus, the Christ. The person who sows the seed, must hear from God in order to plant seeds that will yield and increase.

Additionally, one question must be considered. Have we sown with expectation? Or have we become accustomed to the status quo, sowing with expectation helps to look beyond the seed to the harvest.

Jesus continues to explain the parable that no matter how skilled the Sower, the seeds seem to fall in various places that are unpredictable to the Sower and only known by the ground that catches the seed. Some of the scattered seed fell to the ground and did not take root. The scattering of the seed does not give an indication of a prepared farmer,

but on the contrary the Sower understands not all seeds will take root. Although all seeds have a place in the earth and all seeds can produce, they do not mainly because of their environment. The first seeds scattered fell along the path. These seeds according to the text was trampled upon.

Along the path is a place of shallowness, the seed lands in this peculiar place and become nothing but a door mat for those who are slothful and unconcerned. The Psalmist declared in Psalms 119:11 (KJV) “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” The project will mirror the text in this parable. There will be those who have no regard for the seed nor the Sower. Those who look to themselves to solve the problem may believe the super preacher, star church memberships status will solve the problem of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church by ignoring the overall trend of declining churches in North America to this present day or to be more specific, the smaller context of the CME church in Georgia, in particular the Pleasant Hill Church is an example.

Conducting the project in the local church and in the surrounding community will be used to raise awareness in the Christian Methodist Episcopal church and provide opportunities for evangelism. This helps to develop the mindset that some will never understand the problem but, like the text, it is not because they did not have an opportunity for seeds to permeate their surroundings. The seed is then devoured by the birds of the air. It is ironic that Jesus in the explanation of the parable says those by the wayside hear but the devil snatches the word from their heart. The devouring of the seed by the birds and the snatching of the word from the hearts comes with a costly price? For one never really knows what could have come from the scattered seed in the text.

Remember the seeds did not have a choice where they would land. The snatching of the seed happens because people have not developed an authentic relationship with God. This relationship will allow them to know the power of the seed. It is easy to give power to someone else over your life when you not connected to the true power source.

Then other seeds fall on the rocks and, although they produce its foundations was not secure enough to withstand lack of moisture. One can have great ideas but will not always be the best of ideas.

It may start to look like a breakthrough or great starting point, but the path leads nowhere. In addition, one should consider the lack of essential elements of air, water nutrients and sunlight that are sustainable for plant life in the portion of the parable. Although the writer Luke does not highlight these essential elements, they are important for grow. The seed did grow, but it was not able to survive due to lack of these necessary elements.

In verse seven, we find that some seeds fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up with the seed but choked the life out. Both weed and seed grew together here in this portion of the pericope. Each seed as they grow together the thorns outnumber the seed. Like the prior seeds that produce no fruit, this seed produces no fruit either, however, unlike the others this seed is outnumbered which is the biggest problem. This crowded place, the heart, which is choked-out will not humble itself to be governed by God. The heart wanders because of the cares of the world trying to find fertile ground but cannot.

In verse eight, the author begins with other seeds; these seeds tend to grow. Amazingly, not only did they grow but they produced good fruit. Although the other seeds grew to some point but did not produce fruit. This seed lands on good ground and

produces plenty, but others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold. This comparison to the other seeds shows how favorable the crop can be when it is planted in good soil.

Some writers may disagree with the manifold blessing of one hundred-fold, which could be considered prosperity Gospel. In the Hebrew Bible, however, there is other evidence of this type of blessing. In Genesis 26:12, when Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the Lord blessed him. Joseph Fitzmyer argues,

Luke has substituted a LXX expression “it made fruit.” He also simplified the expression of the huge yield...reports that seed sown “near Gadara, in Syria” yielded a hundred-fold-so the yield is not unlikely...the yield should be understood of the “return of seeds reaped for seeds sown” since that is the way a yield was usually measured in antiquity. This is probably the best explanation of it, but it should be noted all three Synoptic accounts the yield is express in terms of fruit.¹³

It is the Lord who blesses the seed. The fruit becomes the tangible evidence for others to see and the possibility to believe in the Lord of the harvest. In Matthew 9:38, we see the power of praying to the Lord of the harvest. Although Matthew was referring to workers, God still owns the harvest and can choose to manifest God’s blessing at any time when humanity prays to the owner.

In verse nine, when Jesus had said these things Jesus cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” The cry of Jesus in this text is unlike the cry from the cross. Jesus was teaching a valuable principle and the people need to understand the severity of the lesson. Although they were quiet and reluctant to say anything prior to Jesus sharing the parable, Jesus expressed the intent needed to hear what has been said for those that hear

¹³ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 731.

may search their hearts. It is important to note, the hearing is not just done with the ears in the text but, most importantly, the hearing is done with the heart. Jesus wanted to make sure the disciples and others heard what they needed to know?

In verse ten, Jesus unveils the secret and He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’” Although Jesus calls the hearers to hear, now Jesus pulls what might seem like a contradiction to his earlier teaching. According to Klyne Snodgrass,

Certainly, for the evangelists the image is of Jesus as God’s agent sowing God’s word. However, pitting God’s eschatological sowing of people and God’s sowing his word against each other creates a false antithesis. An eschatological sowing of people presupposes people who listen and respond obediently to God’s word or are enabled by God to respond, as is explicit in Jer 24:5-7 and 31:31-34. Isaiah 6 is the one text that brings together the concern for hearing the word of God and the idea of the remnant as a holy seed. If we are correct that Isaiah 6 is the frame on which the parable was formed, then there is no need to drive a wedge between God sowing his people and God sowing his word. It is by sowing the word that the end-time people are planted.”¹⁴

There are several observations to be noted from the sayings of the Lord. Could it be a possibility that Jesus began using parables to conceal his teaching from some, and to reveal it to others? I believe the question is better answered by Joel Green as he suggests:

The third evangelist utilizes this address to disclose the meaning of the mixed responses Jesus had a tractive within the Lukan narrative. Why do/will some embrace the good news and others rejected? According to the perspective provided by Jesus’ story this question about less who hears the word (for it is available to all), and more about the quality of one’s hearing. On the other hand, the tale Jesus narrates seems quite ordinary as it provides the beginning, middle, and end of the yearly cycle experience by farmers. A farmer sows, the seed and the fledgling crop encounter of the normal array of hindrances to growth and maturity, and he harvest his crop. No mention is made of plowing the field, either

¹⁴ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 154.

before or after broadcast in the seed, but this seems not to be an important factor in the story.¹⁵

Did Jesus use parables to conceal truth from the crowds, while revealing it to his followers. We can see from our text that the disciples did not understand the Lord's parables any more than the crowds, but Jesus explained the meaning to them later (Mk. 4:34). By teaching in parables, Jesus did not withhold anything which the people were both eager and able to understand. Mark clearly tells us that Jesus taught the crowds all they could handle: Mark 4:33 states, "With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand." Jesus viewed teaching by parables as a fulfillment of prophecy, or at least as consistent with the ministry which God gave to Isaiah.

The Lord cites from Isaiah chapter six to vindicate His actions. God had sent many prophets to the Nation of Israel, and all of them were rejected, along with their message. The last of the Old Testament prophets was also rejected, at least by the religious leaders of Israel. Isaiah chapter six is the account of this prophet's commission. The words which the Lord cited are the word of God to Isaiah, indicating that his ministry was not one of calling men to repentance, but confirming their condemnation. Isaiah's words sealed Israel's doom and preceded the outpouring of God's judgment on His disobedient people. Jesus viewed His ministry as like that of Isaiah, and thus teaching in parables could be vindicated by referring to Isaiah's account of God's words addressed to Him.

¹⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 312.

The teaching which Jesus was simultaneously concealing and revealing concerned the secrets of the kingdom of God. On Jesus' first Galilean campaign, Jesus concentrated on identifying Himself as Israel's Messiah (cf. Lk. 4:16-21). Now, Jesus seems to be concentrating more on the nature of the kingdom itself. Those from whom the secrets of the kingdom of God are concealed are unbelievers, whose doom is thereby sealed. Jesus conceals the truth from those who are without so that they will not understand and will not repent, and thus not be able to enter His kingdom.

After the intense teaching session Jesus, then answer the question of one of the disciples and begins to share the interpretation of the parable with those who did not understand the meaning. What a wonderful teacher, Jesus does not want anyone left without understanding. So, he begins to unpack the parable. The parable of the Sower explained in Luke states:

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience (Lk. 8:11-15).

This parable provides the meaning of what Jesus was sharing with the crowd again. The Sower can be viewed as is the man or women of God who has masterfully crafted the gift of sharing the word of God. The word is from the context of the Hebrew Bible which would have been available at that time is history. Jesus taught the word of God with a willing heart because the word can change lives, circumstances, and situations. The words that the Lukan writer uses are the words of Christ, which points the reader to the

flaws of their understanding. The explanation of the text can be viewed as a sense of enlightenment or wakening for those who hear and obey, but also for those who had the opportunity to hear and respond to the word of God. For those who are careless, slothful, and unconcerned with the environment around them seems to keep them from prospering in the word and causes them to miss the opportunity for the blessings of the harvest. When the word is alive in the hearts of men, we can become beneficiaries of God bountiful blessings.

As Jesus explains the parable to the disciples, the seed now becomes the word of God. In the parable, Jesus starts off in the same order by sharing with the crowd those by the wayside that hear the word of God. Robert C. Tannehill address the parable in this manner, “The explanation of this parable begins by identifying the seed with the word of God. Although this term can refer to the church’s missionary preaching (Acts 4:31), in this context it refers to preaching and teaching of Jesus.”¹⁶ Tannehill point is considered and valid because the church does have a mission to preach the gospel of Jesus the Christ. However, if the people are not trained and taught how should they teach? The mission becomes impossible and bears little to no fruit at all. With evangelism there must be long term commitment and the desire to continue to learn and teach others. The church must answer the question like that of Ezekiel day, can these bones live? My project cannot ask for hearers only to be a part of workshops.

When hearing the word of God, there should be an innate desire to do God’s will, yet Jesus says those by the wayside who hear the devil comes and steals, snatches, and prey on the word of God out of the hearts less they believe. This desire coming from the

¹⁶ Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 141.

heart should be easily identified by those who hear the word. Is it possible to argue for those who hear the word? The enemy then snatches the word from their hearts because they do not understand the importance of having a relationship with God. For by hearing the word, our lives are changed, and by receiving the word we change the lives of others. So, in a very real sense Jesus is teaching evangelism 101. How is it possible for those who hear the word of God and not remain in God? The cunningness of the devil snatches the word because of the easy access the enemy has to the hearer.

Jesus reminds the disciples in verse nine, those that have ears let them hear. So here he explains the importance of not falling prey to tricks of the devil. Jeremiah 17:9 records these words “Above all things the heart is deceitfully wicked who can know it but God (NIV). What kind of a person would allow the enemy free access to the preciousness of their relationship with God? One could argue that when the word is sown on shallow ground. The enemy does not have free access due to the suggested grappling over the word in the heart because all seeds had equal opportunity to produce.

Jesus then moves on to suggest that the stolen word from the hearts prevent not only one from hearing but believing. A belief in God is necessary for the seed, in this case, to take root. Believing in God is more than lip service, believing God calls one into action, and these actions would be to develop and intimate and authentic relationship with the Almighty God. So, is it fair for one to say that the word of God is necessary for believing and salvation? Each explanation of the parable goes a little further. The seed is representing the word that fell on the rock. They also hear again the concept of hearing the word is not enough for just as the first explanation. Receiving the word of God for the hearer could mean they have established some type of relationship with God, yet the

relationship may be shaky at best. Anyone who truly hears the word of God once the word enters the heart it will never leave. It changes the heart for God, a word entered the ear and changed their life. Jesus said, the word of God being received with joy, the joy described here in the text I believe is joy in the heart as opposed to the temporally joy the world describes. Jesus' use of the word joy could be head and not heart joy. This joy becomes temporary and conditional; but its presence was there. Those who hear the word from the rocky seed have no root. The simplicity of the root can be overlooked possibly because the root is below the ground. The initial growth of any seed is not seen. Consider the thought - the initial growth begins downward before a blade above the earth can be seen. When the word is rooted in the hearts of the people no one can see it, but it grows. Luke 14:7 states, "Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

Jesus explains the seed that grows among the thorns, the thorns are choked out. The environment has become a deterrent to the seed and its growth. The heart that hears the word and go into the marketplace, and public square is liken to the man who beholds his face in the mirror for soon they forget their appearance. So, like the ones who fall among the thorns. When the worldly pleasures are present, they soon forget about the word and become consumed with the cares of the world. The concern is for the temporal things in life cares the natural order food, shelter, clothing become one of the central foci. In addition to the cares of the world, it becomes increasingly easy for a person to focus on the riches of the world. When the word is not rooted in the hearts of the people as seen in this explanation the heart wanders from God into a strange place. The strange places in

the text become the world, and the riches of life, which replace the word; and much is said about the riches of the world. Jesus said it best what would it profit for someone to gain the world and lose your soul. The soul must become more important than the material things. This one did produce fruit; however, the fruit was not mature.

Undeveloped fruit at its best is seen but cannot be used for much. The word must become mature in our heart. The fruit that is not mature may waver in the faith. It is critically important that one seek to become producers of good fruit. Although others can become fruit inspectors and judgmental the fruit coming from mature growth is always fresher.

Finally, the seeds that fell on good soil produced grew and produced a harvest. Much like the heart, once fully developed in the word of God, it produces a great harvest. The good seed happens to bear the best fruit the heart that hears and recognizes the love of God and the power of God can fully understand the text from 2 Chronicles 2:14-15 “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place.” What a powerful testimony of this love and power. Bearing of fruit and the harvest must be layered with prayer and anticipation. The text suggests a waiting period just as the seed is sown and grows downward first. We cannot see what has been produced beneath the soil, but we must be patient enough to wait on God to produce the necessary fruit and then harvest.

The African American Experience

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is an African American church that seeks to follow the biblical mandate of evangelism. Evangelism for the institution is faced with many societal issues. The context is comparable to the writings of Luke, which dealt with power and poverty. My context has some of the same political, education, racial and financial disparities.

The crowd that Jesus spoke to was diverse and could be categorized as peasants and sharecroppers. Jesus referenced a house divided cannot stand and blind leaders of the blind. In the Luke narrative, the evidence of division appears on some occasions. The rich against the poor, the learned against the unlearned, those who could read and those who could not. The text pitches the have against the have nots. This example could also be found in the context prior to March 15, 2020, when my context changed. CME morning worship before Covid-19 was divided for fear of the other, fear of outsiders, and those who may not look, act, or smell like those in the building. Again prior to Covid-19, there was another great divide which included the likes of race, gender, sexual preference, social, and economical issues in the Black church. However, it is important to include the Nones (those who have no affiliation with a denomination or church but love God), and the Dones (those who are completely done with the establishment of organized worship but love God). The two groups make up a major population that have not been present in the Black church.

The African American experience interpreting the sacred text and the authority of scripture has always been important to the African American church. “The Black experience in America has certainly conditioned Black interpretation of the Bible. Even

though they were influenced by oppressive psychological, social, economic, and political forces. Blacks have displayed a tremendous transcendent spirit that has enabled them to confront the biblical text creatively.”¹⁷

My project will seek to bring a quality of training through evangelism for a church that not on the countryside of the mountain in Galilee. But, in the impoverished part of the city where the church looks like the people in similar situations. Yet, in these times the African American church can appear to those in the community we should serve as a social club, I do not say this lightly. The organization structure of the church celebrates membership. Opposed to discipleship which Jesus compelled disciples to do.

A close examination of the biblical account in the Luke-Acts letter helps my project understand the commission or sending of Gods people. According to Luke 24:44–49:

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The authority of scripture in the African American Church must be a lived experience in every aspect evangelism. Jesus calls the disciples witnesses. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church must become witnesses to tell the story of Christ the birth, life, death, resurrection, and accension! My project seeks to teach and even remind the church of the mission of Christ.

¹⁷ Thomas L. Hoyt, *Stony the Road We Trod: An African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 27.

Acts 1:4–8 states:

And being assembled with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Acts version of the commission echoes Luke’s gospel. Now we see after a period of waiting Jesus gave specific directions and the promise of power (The Holy Spirit) to become witnesses. The witness of the Lord mighty deeds, the African American Church can witness to the World. Not as members of the church but disciples of Jesus the Christ. The church cannot afford to become a social club or a social media club (due to COVID-19). Evangelism preparation leads to discipleship, witness, and proclamation.

The African American church, formerly known as the Negro Church, Black Church (Still used) was the epic center of the African American community. The church was the school Monday through Friday, the meeting place for civic organizations and Sunday the place of worship. The New Testament church shows the need to live out the gospel. James Cone writes, “The task of the church is three-fold. First, it proclaims the reality of divine liberation. Secondly, it shares the liberation struggle. Thirdly, the church as a fellowship is a visible manifestation that the gospel is a reality.”¹⁸ African Americans must not remain silent in society today. The stakes are too high, yes, the church has come a long way, but we still have ways to go to fully pursue and fulfill the mission of God for the church. However, the African American Church cannot do it alone. The African

¹⁸ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 158.

American church must come into agreement with the will of God and other faith institutions, not for self-gain but to God's glory. "Christian denominations worldwide have been deeply divided over issues of gender, sexual morality, and homosexuality. These debates illustrate a sharp global division with many North American and European churches."¹⁹ Holistic evangelism will equip clergy and laity to deal with the social issues. Jesus had a remarkably diverse group of followers on the hill side of Galilee as he taught. My project will not be a one size fits all, but its development and outcomes will assist the Christian Methodist Episcopal church from becoming biased with the gospel that liberated all of God's people from the presence, penalty, and power of sin. The song says I know it was the blood, for one day when I was lost, he died on the cross. So, to teach is to learn, to train is to empower. My project will do both with the power of the Holy Spirit and evangelism.

Summary

The church must make sure its relevancy is seen inside the church, the community, and the city. When members like the seed Jesus describes can become disciples, no matter the age. Members begin to see how the church and the need for evangelism is relevant to their everyday lives, it might make a difference in their commitment and work in the church. This commitment can help the church grow and become viable and relevant. The internal evidence of growth inside the church when older members are welcoming younger members inside the circle of leadership, which can increase the growth of the church because the leadership positions have been

¹⁹ Phillip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

dominated and held on by the older members. Both younger and older members are needed to find solutions to a problem that continues to be on a down trend. There are plenty of competing interest with the things of the world. The activeness of younger adults who have less time for church because of these demands. That is why Christians must ensure that members see a church that is relevant and addresses issues, needs of the community, and provide a nourished connection to the spirit of God to operate in our lives.

Not only address declining membership, but also, church membership because people are not going to become a part of what they do not feel is relevant or needed to live a blessed life. When people see this, then they want to be a part of something that makes a difference. The question one could pose to the church is a self-evaluation of: is the church relevant? Does it speak to the lives of its members or perspective members? Is the church seen as relevant in the community? Again, people want to be a part of something that is making a difference. It helps with commitment as well and leads to all the other things that comes from addressing the decline in attendance, membership, tithes, and offerings, then turn them around to see increases in these same areas from making the church relevant.

The project is designed to give answers and results to the problem being addressed in the context for the CME Church. To rewrite the narrative these scriptures have been chosen so, that it is no longer a why question. It becomes a how did the Christian Methodist Episcopal in Georgia, North developed a plan for church growth, expansion, and planting? The Christian Methodist Episcopal church has ignored the overall trend of declining churches in North America to this present day, to be more

specific, the smaller context of the CME church in Georgia in particularly the Pleasant Hill CME Church. This project is an example for raising awareness in the Christian Methodist Episcopal church and the opportunities for evangelism in the areas of church growth which can produce church revitalization, and church expansion. This example did bring together corporations, business, and community leaders together to discuss and evaluate a potential plan for the community empowerment. The example has assisted the congregation to become aware of community needs and participate in the action of advocacy which could strengthen the faith and business community. The church of today is being called to sound the trumpet, as well. We may vary in the analysis and the prescription we offer, but the issues that need to be addressed are threatening our well-being with ever increasing urgency.²⁰

Luke captures evangelism for the biblical perspective in several different chapters, sending of the twelve (LK. 9: 1-9), sending of the seventy (Lk. 10:1-12), leaving all to follow Christ (Lk. 14:25-33), telling the disciples to go preach (Lk. 24:44-49), and witnessing in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Lk. 1:4-8). Jesus sends the disciples and calls the disciples to blow the trumpet. The sound of the trumpet is refreshing and liberating. Evangelism in the Christian Methodist Episcopal church can be liberating once pastors and laity have been properly taught and trained. Then trained clergy and laity will view evangelism as a conscious and calculated lifestyle opposed to an event.

²⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 279.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The Azusa Street Revival changed an entire generation. My project will use the principles of the revival to assist the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church find its passion it once had for evangelism. The history of the Azusa Street Revival is a major shift in the American culture, society, and the church. Its relevance is at the beginning of the twentieth century, 1906-1908, to be more specific. In 1906, forty and three years after the emancipation proclamation was signed, America then and now experienced racial tension, unjust law and law-enforcement, high profile murders, and the use of the government to continue to suppress African Americans. Yet, God decided to bless the work and answer the prayers of a group of people who wanted to start a congregation which led to a major denomination.

The Formative Years

In 1905 William J. Seymour, the one-eyed, thirty-four-year-old son of freed slaves, was a student of well-known Pentecostal preacher, Charles Parham, and an interim pastor for a small holiness church in Topeka, Kansas. Seymour inherited from Parham the belief that baptism with the Holy Spirit was the third work of grace, following the new birth (first work of grace) and entire sanctification (second work of grace). Neely Terry, an African American woman who attended a small holiness church pastored by Julia Hutchins in Los Angeles, made a trip to visit family in Houston late in 1905. While in Houston, she visited Seymour's church, where he preached on receiving the Holy Spirit with the

evidence of speaking in other tongues. Though he had not experienced this personally, Terry was impressed with his character and message. Once home in California, Terry suggested that Seymour be invited to speak at the local church. Seymour received and accepted the invitation in February 1906. He received financial help and a blessing from Parham for his planned one-month visit.¹

It could be said that God is interested in Church history for God calls us to remember while remembering we find ourselves in moments of reflection of God present in and throughout the Church. We believe in historical accounts of scripture and the writers who wrote the historical reflections. Then the Christian Church must recognize the importance of Church history. Church history must also be considered, if the church is to move forward, it must first know where it has been. It is critically important to start with the word of God. When considering Church history, God's word is a large historical reference for our present day. The Christian must look at history and look to history while answering some of the most profound and unusual questions about the human condition, in the life of the Church. It begins with a belief in God. Seymour not only believed in God's ability to move by the Holy Spirit but also the power of pray was important to him. While in Los Angeles awaiting the arrival of Paramore in 1906 Seymour led and a group of believers in pray meetings according to Bergunder, "Seymour's prayer meeting was now bursting at the seams and excitement was in the air. A full-blown revival was just around the corner."² The importance of prayer cannot be overlooked from the past, present or the future of the church.

¹ Jack W. Hayford and S. David Moore, *The Charismatic Century: The Enduring Impact of the Azusa Street Revival* (New York, NY: Warner Faith, 2006), 47.

² Michael Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 784-790.

Some mainline churches were organized during oppression, for example, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church which on December 15, 1870, began to pray and ask God to grant liberty from the Methodist Episcopal Church South. In which the denomination wanted to start its church.

The next day December 16, 1870, on the floor of the General Conference, the matter was brought before the conference for a vote. The vote passed and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was formed on December 16, 1870, with the election of Bishop Vanderhousht and Bishop Miles. A denomination with its historical context were ex-slaves and predominately Southern Church.³ A thirty-six-year-old denomination of Wesley offspring unlike Wesley who was seeking to revive the Church of England, forty-one former slaves were seeking to start their own denomination. They were much like Paramore and Seymour who set the world on fire through the power of the Holy Spirit. Vanderhousht and Miles had to navigate the waters of lynching, mob attacks, the Klan, and voting rights to start this new work for God in the southern region of the country.

History can teach us the importance of future success. The CME Church in 1870 and the leaders of that time in the history of our denomination had no idea that some of the same problems would exist today. The self-afflicted oppression of people who have not been delivered from the mental anguish of fear. This new denomination of Wesleyan heritage and spiritual ancestry with dark skin and a love for God can change the world. The church one hundred and fifty years later, has lost the creative genius of the founding fathers. It has lost the brilliance of their founders to pray and watch God bless the will of

³ Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the Christian Methodist Church* (Memphis, TN: CME Publishing House, 2018), 29-30.

God for the denomination. If history is a teacher, the lesson must be learned; or we will flunk and miss the opportunity to become better than our days of old.

What we learn from history can change the trajectory of any movement, company, organization, and family. History teaches and allows us to re-create moments and times that are valuable for many movements. However, history also teaches what to do and what not to do.

Seymour's theological world was shaped by his Holiness, AME, and Arminian backgrounds. He placed a tremendous emphasis on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20), evangelism, and a personal born-again conversion experience with Jesus Christ. Seymour is quoted saying, “We must remember that every man that is born . . . [is] lame in his intellect, will, and affections” and for this reason needs to be born-again and filled with the illumination of Holy Ghost.⁴ His approach of evangelism has Methodist roots, Seymour has a view of teaching, training, and helping clergy to be trained to carry out the work of the Lord to do no harm and avoid evil of every kind.

To ignore the historical comparison of Methodism and Holiness would be tragic for the Christian Church. John Wesley did not set out to create a new church. Wesley's evangelistic desire was to rekindle the lost fire of the Church in England. Wesley wanted renewal in the Church of England. However, as God would have it, Wesley created an evangelistic movement that birthed the several Methodist denominations. Seymour sought to do something similar which led to the birth of the Holiness Church. My point here is my project seeks to restore or recreate a passion for evangelism in the Christian Methodist Episcopal church. This has not been a focus of the CME since the early late

⁴ Robert C. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecost Movement* (Nashville, TN: Emanate Books, 2007), 67.

1800s and early 1900s. Of course, there are systems and politics which is a part of the historical landscape of the church that will try to restrict the movement of evangelism.

Social Issues Around Revival

America was not ready for such a revival like Azusa Street. The move of the power of God through the Holy Spirit during the days of the revival for Seymour and the Pentecostal Movement was influential for the church at the start of the twentieth century and during the industrial age. The power of the Holy Spirit was moving in the city of Los Angeles, California. The revival made several accomplishments, but it also had its many barriers; but one of the major accomplishments of the Azusa Street Revival was the power to draw all of God's people under the umbrella of faith.

Race and Industrial Infrastructure

The drawing power of the Holy Spirit allowed Hispanics, Blacks, and Whites worshiping together. Only God could provide such peace in a society of racial tension. The industrial age was ready for such a movement as well. The distribution of tracts and other material that spoke to the believers about God and the power of the Holy Spirit solidified a place in America history at that time for the church. The move of God and the power of the Holy Spirit made this revival successful. The revival sparked the spawn of many denominations and thousands of people from 1906 until the present have been affected.

Backlash of the Movement

Although there were people who did not approve, God was moving through the power of the Holy Spirit. Another factor in the success of the movement came at the cost of loss. The loss was a separation from the normal. This new normal in the town and cities was gigantic, to say the least. Indeed, one person could not take credit for such a movement, but God was changing and reshaping Church history through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Again, this was a larger-than-life movement. God chose the right figure, at the right time to do the work of the ministry. God chose the person to carry out the work for God. Looking at whom God calls throughout the history of the Christian Church there are some noticeable distinctions of humility and a willingness to change the social norms. God used the unordinary to begin the church in Jerusalem. God used prayer to create a revival that would last several years. God used prayer and the revival to change the course of Christian history. Wesley and Seymour could have begun to use excuses that indicated why they needed to give up. However, the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit helped them to keep going. The revival continued. It became more evident in the power of prayer.

Some people might have wanted a new way of hearing from God. It sought with a willing heart. Plus, they wanted to be used by God uniquely. The measurability of Azusa Street was the out-poring of the Holy Spirit with people gathering from various parts of the city, state, country, and world to feel the presence and baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was in 1906 when Robert Seymour a Houston, Texas native, was invited to Los Angeles California to preach the gospel of Jesus the Christ. Through the preaching of Seymour

and the power of the Holy Spirit was evidenced by speaking in an unknown tongue the Azusa Street Revival was filled with miracles signs and wonders.

This moment called for balance, humility and surrender of private agenda and personal kingdoms. This moment calls to a surrender of our minds – to God’s Spirit of Truth and Wisdom, while refusing the folly or either fanaticism or intellectualism. This moment calls the entire Church to lead the way in overthrowing the global, human-race-wide bondage to ethical separatism born of sinful pride, economic exploitation, historic hatred, and unforgiving retaliation. Finally, this movement calls for a dual commitment- (1) to lay ourselves bare, to be delivered from the fear that seeks to control the Holy Spirit and restrict supernatural manifestations. (2) to lay aside the legalism that either inclines to trivialize or tends to mandate speaking in tongues.⁵

We must not abandon history, for history serves us well in our current times.

Has the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church taken seriously the history of prayer and the attachment of growth? I suggest the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church must understand the power of prayer to keep moving forward. Recalling that night, Friday December 15, 1870, the need for prayer was essential in preparing for the future work of the denomination. In comparison or conjunction with the time frame of the Azusa Street Revival, the CME church had a remarkably successful fruitful season towards the end of eighteenth century.

The movement of Azusa was like no other during its time. My project can learn from the revival experience, although I was not there to witness the event; nor do I know anyone alive that attended the event. The relevance of the revival can bring life to a struggling denomination by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although there is a vast number of doctrinal differences, the concept of God moving by the power of the Holy Spirit must

⁵ Jack Hayford and David S. Moore, *The Charismatic Century: The Enduring Impact of the Azusa Street Revival* (New York, NY: Warner Faith, 2006), 95-96.

be accepted. I am not speaking specifically to the manifestation of the gift of speaking in tongues but the love of God and neighbor.

Critics of the Movement

My project will pull the similarities of the power of God used during the revival, historically. Gaston Espinosa writes:

The purpose of the Pentecost (the product of the revival) is four-fold. First—the 'sign of a believer.' Mark 16:16–20, one of God's credentials to those engaged in His work. Second—a 'sign to unbelievers.' Scores of infidels have been converted on hearing the workers speak in real languages, seeing this latter-day proof of the authenticity of the Bible . . . Third—it is the power of witness; not only to prophesy by inspiration in native tongue, but any language of the world. . . . Fourth—it constitutes the sealing power. . . . Speaking in tongues is the only legitimate evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and no one can feel assured they have the second chapter of Acts experience unless they talk freely in a real language as the Spirit gives utterance. Anyone going to a foreign field should seek the gift of the language of that country and should be able to use it and understand it when spoken by others. . . . O, how many have been deceived by the Azusa mess.⁶

The Azusa Street Revival did not come without its critics and nay-sayers to what might have looked like some bewildering sideshow. The distinct difference between the terminology could have been a challenge for the critics. Similar to the critics of the disciples in Acts 2: 13 when the Holy Spirit had given them cloven tongues. Others in the community said they were drunk with new wine. Much like Seymour, some say historically, the movement was destined to fail from the beginning. While the mission would become the spiritual home for hundreds, it was also tempting, if not satisfying watering hole for thousands more... Often the reward for some was merely entertainment as they watched those who were serious about meeting God. Still others came to cast

⁶ Gastón Espinosa, ed., *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 146.

stones at the misguided and the dangerous direction they believed the revival was taking. Yet it was impossible to remain neutral about what went on there.”⁷

The invitation for Seymour to speak the next week was withdrawn by placing the padlock on the door of the church. However, God provided a place for Seymour to preach. Rev. Seymour was not the ideal person to lead such a group. The movement was different from mainstream America and starchily different from the major African American denominations around that day. This is one of those movements that became bigger and larger than the personality of the movement. God decided to open a door for Seymour at the home of someone at the church that invited him. However, worship was held on the front porch, the porch could not maintain the weight of the worshippers. They moved to another location on Bonnie Brae Street. This move allowed the group to praise God continually.

Again, I am not advocating that speaking in tongues will change the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, but the terminology of revival, movement, Pentecostalism, and holiness is different in function but those who may not be familiar with the history of the revival may assume the terms are interchangeable. I could very well find critics of my project within the denomination to which I serve. To them, I would argue the revival started the movement which then led to the formation of the denomination. So, in the same way, prayer, revival along with the power of the Holy Spirit can spark “An Example for Church Growth, Planting and Church Revitalization in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.”

⁷ Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival*, vi.

Implication for the CME Church

The historical leadership of the revival was another example of moving amid the work in Los Angeles, California at the beginning of the 1900s. The Church was in for a holistic shift. Not just a surface adjustment nor a bandage to cover the ills of racism, classism, slavery, and oppression. The revival allowed people of all ethnic backgrounds to become one in the Spirit of the Lord. This revival was more evangelistic while allowing those who participated to share their faith openly and without fear but, not absent from criticism. Yet for the Black Church, it was a time of discovery and freedom. History also teaches us what to do and what not to do, what works, and what does not work. Yet, many churches find themselves in an escapable bubble when it comes to change.

F. Douglas Powe, Jr. writes, “Addressing the evangelistic crisis in African American Congregations will never be easy. Many African American congregations are working with old assumptions that perpetuate evangelistic practice from generations past. The assumptions of these congregations are like old wineskins and attempting to introduce new evangelistic practices is like trying to pour new wine into old wineskins.”⁸ Powe seems to suggest the history of the ideology within the Christian can be taken for granted when it comes to faith sharing, evangelistic events, and programs such as prayer and revival. Which is what Seymour used to change a city, state, country, and the world in his day. My project is geared to reach new people and help recharge those who are in the pews; to help guide our leaders from bishops, presiding elders, pastors, and leaders in the local church of God's historical mission for the church.

⁸ Douglas F. Powe Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), xiii.

As I stated earlier, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church could glean from the revival although there are some stark differences from polity, theology, and culture. With history, I can focus on the commonalities of each organization. I have identified tenets of the historical branch that provides such opportunities for the CME Church. Although they will not be listed in order of importance, they all hold merit to the success of my project.

The word of God is a much-needed component to the history of the Church. The word of God preached and lived in the lives of the believer witnesses to those who may want to become a Christian. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that is needed to carry out the work of the Lord. I contend if you are going to do anything for God, we must talk to God and hear what is required of us, according to God's will. It could be said during the revival, God used the participants to be a witness of the through the word of God and prayer to bring others into a relationship to create change and to share one's faith. Although it would be safe to say, not all participants came for the same reason. However, with many people attending the revival from all over the world, it was phenomenal.

This is relevant because God sent Seymour on assignment on February 22, 1906, although critics could not see the importance of Seymour's presence. The world had to take notice of what was happening. The Book of Ecclesiastes declares that there is nothing new under the sun. History confirms what the word of God says. God did it before surely, God can do it again.

An invitation allows participants to have some part of ownership in the revival. It invites people to become part of history from every corner of the world. This helps to give validity and ownership. I believe it helps to maintain the longevity of the revival even though in the present context of the revival they may not have known they were

making history; at some point however, it became apparent. I would imagine it to be exceedingly difficult to describe the experience of the revival. For there are moments when God is doing something so extraordinary it becomes hard to explain. People would have to see for themselves.

As it relates to the element of surprise, the mystery of God confounds human intellect. There is a time when God allows us to experience the unexpected; but it is not unexpected for God. For it may catch humanity off guard. However, it never catches God off guard.

Conclusion

It is all a matter of what one may see because we have more in common than we think, at times. The great divide does not concern God; but God concern is humanity. History can teach us so much by connecting the dots of history and present. We can use our lived experience for a greater understanding of God's will.

Although my project is for a current context, at some point, it will be found in the archives of history to be used as research of a talking point around the table of history. So, the importance and relevance of my project seen is future tense as well. I have developed a conception of the word "Now" which, to me, serves as past, present, and future. Let me explain, my work is a very present work but is it comprised of history as I write now to create change for the future. So, when using in certain contexts, for "Now," represents all three components of time past, present, and future. Not only am I concerned about the current generation but future generations. Sankofa is the process of looking back to move forward.

Renita J. Weems writes, “if you’re going to reach back for your past, don’t go for the angles, the priesthood, the profits. Go for faith!”⁹ That is why the writer says, “now” in Hebrews 11:1. After the author has eliminated all these things in the ten previous chapters, after the writer has theologically destroyed all these things the writer says, “Now Faith!” How are you going to live between the last time you heard from God and the next time you hear from God? By faith.¹⁰ The history of faith led Seymour to California to create a revival of historical portions. Many who attend may have attended for various reasons; however, I believe the underlying connection to the CME Church is to reach back, as Weems says, “it’s faith.” The faith of our foremothers and forefathers can bring us from the past to a present hope, and to a future hope in faith.

The historical examples of faith can be found within the historical record of Hebrews. The writer gives examples of faith that was forged in various ways. Yet, God’s presence was available not only to those whose name are written in chapter eleven of Hebrews, but to Seymour, Vanderhorst, and Miles.

Weems writes, “Therefore let us run this race with patience, looking to Jesus. And when I get finished, I am going to pass the baton on to someone else. And when she gets finished, she is going to pass the baton to somebody else. And what I don’t finish, someone else is going to finish, because we are going to be looking to Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith.”¹¹ Those words are very important to my project for the remainder of what we do is of God first, then for others as well. To create a project

⁹ Renita J. Weems, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 113.

¹⁰ Weems, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion*, 109-115.

¹¹ Weems, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion*, 109-115.

that will pull together components of ideas from the life of various men and women who have spoken in times past and present, which means I do not stand alone. From the ecclesia to the academy, and all points in between, God uses God's creation to relay the important messages of unity in the body of Christ.

My focus is not on what divides the revival and inception of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church but what brings the project together. The tapestry of thought is creating an example of history for the denomination. The history of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is extraordinarily rich. The church has seen many monumental moments that help define its existence. Since the inception of the 1870 General Conference in Jackson, Tennessee, the forty-one former slaves organized their church. The men who understood that faith was necessary to begin a new branch of Methodism, which was then called the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. These founding members had the desire to identify with the past but were looking forward to a bright future.

This CME church has become comfortable in Zion. They are laid back taking on a relaxing position. A church, at times which used education as the leader instead of the Holy Spirit. How we carefully examine our historical data will determine the destiny of the church. The Azusa revival can be a freshness to the church in ways not imagined before but, it is not done in a vacuum. It will take intentionality just as it was when the forty-one men gathered to organize it. The freshness of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the Spirit created global change.

Robert E. Coleman writes, “Let no one imagine, however, that this kind of experience with Christ could be engendered by human ingenuity. Jesus made it

abundantly clear that his life was mediated only through the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.”¹² As imitators of Christ, our life must be led by the Holy Spirit. Again, we can learn from history and can change the trajectory of any movement, company, organization, and family. History teaches and allows us to re-create moments and times that are unbelievably valuable for many movements.

Societal issues of that time in history created the climate for such an evangelistic revival. The revival created a movement that was pivotal to the start of the twentieth century. The power of the Holy Spirit was moving in the city of Los Angeles. One of many major accomplishments of the Azusa Street Revival was the power to draw all of God's people under the umbrella of faith. The drawing power of the Holy Spirit allowed Hispanics, Blacks, and Whites to worship together. Only God could provide such peace in the society of racial tension.

My context will have the blueprint to reach people from all backgrounds and races. According to *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Church 2018*, historically the purpose of each local church is to create a commission on membership and evangelism which says, “Each church shall have a commission on membership and evangelism to work in cooperation with the pastor, Presiding Elder and District Director of Evangelism in spreading the “Good News” of Jesus Christ and enhance the spiritual life of the congregation.”¹³ This historical document has been lying dormant in the life of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

¹² Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1993), 65.

¹³ Lewis, *Book of Discipline*, 142.

Therefore, my project begins with prayer. I believe if the church is going to do ministry the church must hear and do the will of God. This can be done through the power of prayer, power of the Holy Spirit, and the people of God being committed to doing the work much like the Azusa Street Revival.

Historically, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has not focused on evangelism or church growth which is one of the many reasons for declining membership. Internally, we do a decent job at maintenance but with the graying of the church, prayerfully, my project will breathe new life into the church. Azusa shows me how to start with an idea or hope of what could be. The idea of a place like Azusa was a passion in the heart of one man, William J. Seymour; and he surrounded himself with a team to launch a historical movement. However, for me, unlike Seymour, my context is established; but historically, it has not experienced growth for an extremely long time. Although my project may be a monumental task, it is one worth pursuing. As I stated before, my project will help The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church begin a strategic plan to start the conversation and use my project as an example for evangelism and mission in the areas of church growth, planting, and revitalization. Finally, the church will celebrate 150 years of existence. With a rich history of people that spans through several historical events, the church has found itself quiet. Quiet from a perspective of faith sharing and evangelism. True evangelism is about building relationship and sharing one's faith. This silence was evident with my initiation into the faith at Few's.

Evangelism must also be about sharing the love of God! Too often, the church goes through cycles; and historically, we do not take advantage of the experiences. The cycles of historical evangelism can show what worked and did not work. However, the

church has not kept records so the research and data can be a misnomer. The history of the church can be reduced to a brief paragraph of pastors who were most popular during the life of the church.

We learn from history the plan for God's mission for God's church. God used people from all walks of life, various communities, and education. We too must consider the diversity of the church. Carlyle Stewart in his book *Growing the African American Church* says, "We have all left many different walks of life to walk with Jesus. All of us must be like those called before us and anticipate learning to become fishers of people through ministries of community outreach according to the need and circumstances of our communities."¹⁴ The modern-day church has become individualistic which leads to unstableness in the Christian church and Pleasant Hill CME. The community we now serve must be reflective in the local church. Although the church has challenges of coronavirus and racism, the growth of the church will look different. We must consider the opportunities of social media platforms, tele-conferencing, and streaming services. Pleasant Hill has never had a way of communicating its liberating message of Jesus Christ in its 148-year history.

Historically, people with similar beliefs walked together despite racial, education and financial differences. The dangers of individualism have become a threat to growth. Henry Nouwen says, "When you look at today's church, it is easy to see the prevalence of individualism among ministers and priest. Not too many of us have a vast repertoire of skill to be proud of, but most of us still feel that, if we have anything at all to show we

¹⁴ Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *Growing the African American Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 85.

have to do it solo.”¹⁵ Any pastor or lay person who sees themselves as the main attraction of the gospel has not understood the role of the church in the history of society.

Individualism or superstar leadership is not the way to define the mission of God. Moses sought out his father-in-law when the people became too great a number, Jethro advised him of the need for leaders, structure, and order. History can be a great teacher if the pupil is willing to receive instructions.

¹⁵ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reflections on Christian Leadership: In the Name of Jesus* (New York, NY: Cross Publishing Company, 1989), 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

What does God have to say about evangelism and why should it be important? The challenge in my context comes from untrained clergy and laity that view evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle. I say we need to hear the theological underpinnings of evangelism in the local church is important to God. The importance is seen in theology and in mission of the Christian church. The message of the gospels in the first through the third century brought evangelism with the Christian faith. Modern-day theologians understood the Christian church were dealing with persecution and growth at the same time much like the beginning of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. The message of evangelism or the sending of God's people can often be misunderstood as a spiritual discipline. The lack of evangelism, training and resources in the Christian Methodist Church has contributed to its decline over the last decade or more.

The title of my project is "An Example of Evangelism leading to Church Growth, Growth Planting and Church Revitalization: The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church." The research project is an extremely simplistic way to address the problem in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, which has halted the growth of the denomination. The research will address the problem why the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is not growing? I believe the lack of training and resources for clergy and laity along with

other resources include training materials, practicums, and videos. However, my research will show with training and resource material, practicums and videos, laity and clergy will be better equipped to evangelize or share their faith. Evangelism is great opportunities for the church to do mission work, but some churches only evangelize inside the walls of the church and to each other. This ministry never goes beyond the walls of the building to getting the message of hope, deliverance, and transformation to those who are struggling. Partly because the pastor and congregation do not have a clear understanding of theological evangelism. “Evangelism involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do. Evangelism is announcing that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is Lord of history, Savior and Liberator.”¹ This is the way Jesus began his ministry according to the synoptic gospels, “The time is filled and, the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15).

Evangelism would speak to us and say everyone must have a mission about the future of the mission of the church. No one should exalt themselves above those who we meet. However, the conversation should lead to Christ. It does not matter how the conversation starts but, it should lead and end with Christ. In Luke 8:4-15, the pericope is layered with symbolic imagery in latter day Palestine. Jesus chose to teach at the level of comprehension. The theological implications of the text accentuate the need for teaching. So, one of the first things Jesus did was to share. Jesus recognized the need and gathered crowds to be taught. There seems to be an urgency of the hearers also to understand what is said and implied. Here, in the text, Jesus is the representative of God; Jesus is the living

¹ “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,” World Council of Churches’ Document on Missions and Evangelism, 1998.

active word of God. Jesus teaches God's word to eager listeners and misunderstood disciples. "Jesus is the person *par excellence* the sought for human pretensions, the center of human existence, history, and nature. 'Jesus Christ is the unveiled image of God.'"² The very existence of the parable hinges on the presence of God in Jesus.

My project is dependent of the presence of God in prayer, practice, and implementation to evangelize and grow God's church. As Bonhoeffer presents Jesus and the imago dei, it would not be wise to think my project can become a reality without the presence of God. Although some would argue against it, I can test the effectiveness of the research. The gathering of the crowd and the expectation of Jesus to teach the crowd sets the stage for epic opportunities for learning. Not only did the people gather but they gathered from various towns to hear Jesus. God's active role in society is to call all people reminding them of the mission of God. "Thus, the eschatological dimension in the matrix of mission is found in the confrontation between God's liberating power and the oppressive powers of evil in this world. The Christian community, when living the gospel of Jesus Christ, is participating in God's mission and experiencing the end times, the eschatological moments that point to God's continuing work in the cosmos."³ In this picturesque moment, like the gatherings we hear about in many theological education institutions and faith denominations across the world, people were coming from various communities to learn and take part in God's mission.

The evangelism and mission movement will cause a greater awareness for the ministry of evangelism which is often seen as a separate part of Christianity. Evangelism

² David F. Ford, *The Modern Theologians* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 51.

³ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission: An Essential Guide: The Church in the Matrix Mission* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 78.

is contextualized which make it authentic. However, in many instances, it can become more of an event or another-thing to be done in the walk with Christ opposed to apart of Christian living. Sharing the gospel of Jesus, the Christ, through our faith is necessary. It is important that we share for the following reasons. Leslie Newbigin in his book, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* mentions his concerns on the mission of God by stating:

- (1) Huge numbers of people remain in ignorance of the gospel, and they will not be reached by their Christians neighbors.
- (2) They must hear the Gospel in terms of their own cultures, for “God accepts world cultures.”
- (3) Therefore, there must be a deliberate crossing of cultural frontiers: the natural growth of churches through contrast within the same culture will not accomplish this.
- (4) The aim must be in every piece of culture mosaic that makes up human existence there shall be “Christian Churches which fit that piece and are closely adapted to its culture”
- (5) The future belongs to the masses. They have “a built-in receptivity to the Good News.” Therefore, enormous growth is possible if the right methods are followed.⁴

It crucial for my project to use the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the love of God and faith to believe the church can indeed grow. Theologically, the project will look at the examples of Jesus evangelistic ministry concerning the churches mission.

The Kingdom of God language speaks to the mission of the church. In his book *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor*, Scott J. Jones asks this question: How do we understand the mission of the church? His response to the question comes in this manner. “It is crucial that one begin with God’s mission and see that God has called the

⁴ Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 123.

church into being and created it to participate in it. Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi defines mission as “the participation of the people of God in God’s action in the world.”⁵ “Jones further states God’s action is more extensive than the work of the church. God is at work using other means to accomplish the mission Dei.”⁶

Jones’s statement leaves out the connection between the natural order of God’s church concerning the ecclesia. Jones’ question of how do we understand the mission of the church the mission Dei? It is my conviction that people must be taught to understand the mission of the church. Unless the mission of the church becomes a personal one, a fabricated one, a manufactured one opposed to a natural one will emerge. Since God called the church, it is God who will care, provide, and protect the church. The church is privileged to be a part of God’s mission. In its simplest form the mission of the church is spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ with love and passion. God’s selflessness of the sacrifice of Jesus showed God’s love towards humanity. The research project offers the love of God in a natural, yet holistic manner so that the mission of the church can grow at Pleasant Hill. However, to truly know the mission of the church we must consider the mission of God. It can be found in the embodiment of Jesus yes, but could it be much deeper? I believe so, the mission of God could be the peace of fellowship with God and peace of humanity without the presence of sin a utopia.

The second creation story is a great example. Jesus is a part of the overall mission but not the completed mission. The church has a mission as well its mission in the world has not been completed. So, then God expects humanity to participate in the mission of

⁵ Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 53.

⁶ Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor*, 53.

the of evangelism once we except Christ as Savior until we die. “Evangelism, then means enlisting people for the reign of God, liberating them for themselves, their sins and their entanglements so they will be free for God and neighbor.”⁷ says John Shelby Spong. I stated the mission of the church is to spread the gospel of Jesus the Christ. It is also for equipping the believers to share the gospel.

However, I will attempt to answer the second question. Evangelism is found in the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. It is a part of the mission of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to impute righteousness to humanity. Therefore, it is not owned by man but given by God.

Evangelism must become an outward expression of God’s redemptive love of humanity.

Looking through the biblical, historical, and theological lenses the definition of evangelism and missions can be found with the word “go.” The context has a bad understanding in the church. The word “go” for many believers is for someone else to “go” and not them. The biblical passage of Matthew 28:19 states, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (NIV).” Famously known as the Great Commission or the great sending in less theological circles is a direct reflection of evangelism.

Evangelism and Worship

To further define evangelism, one must consider these components, such as worship, proclamation, song, prayer, and discipleship. The pastor is called to equip and send, but the equipping station is the local church. I am concerned the church has not

⁷ John Shelby Spong, “Evangelism When Certainly Is an Illusion,” *The Christian Century*, vol. 99, 11-16.

done an adequate job defining what is meant by evangelism. Melva Costen says, “A worshipping community in missions is evidence of God’s empowerment and sending the church forth to verbally spread the good news and to live the faith so that the love of God can be seen and heard in the actions of persons and communities.”⁸ The communities that Costen raises are crucial to train, teach and implement the mission of God. The research project will help teach and train leaders who have the desire and passion for basic encounters with people to experience extraordinary intentional dialogue about the church. How then do we define evangelism needs to be addressed? Yet, another question is important and could lead to answer the first question, are we doing evangelism or is evangelism something done to people? Permit me, if you will, to leave the first question to my research. However, I will attempt to answer the second question. Evangelism is found in the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. It is a part of the mission of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to impute to humanity. Therefore, it is not owned by man but given by God.

In defining evangelism consider this thought, evangelism is the community of believers who recognize God as the focal point of holy speech about Christ. Compelling those who are weakened by the world and need a sacred space and place within one’s personal theology and communal accountability to know the Christ. Evangelism also brings others inside the faith community and strengthens those within the faith community. Evangelism creates a centering moment of examining God in the life of the believer through the confession of faith for the believer and who God is for the non-believer. Helping to open the conscious awareness of a need for God in public and private

⁸ Wilson Melva Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 113.

worship, proclamation, song, prayer, and discipleship that the community of God may be strengthened. The commission to “go” is from God.

David J. Bosch

David J. Bosch states that, “Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin and inviting them to become living members of Christ’s earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁹ From the biblical perspective, Bosch uses the Matthean view of Jesus and evangelism. For the Jewish community found in Matthew’s narrative the church points to the pericope found in Matthew 28:19-20. Matthew has several goals in evangelism thus he wants to recognize the kingdom of God. It is important to understand his community was dealing with imperialism and the most recognizable king of his day was in Egypt and the reign of Herod. He introduced Jesus in alignment with the ancestors as he brings Jesus through the lineage of Jewish validity. This Kingdom of God language may contrast with the language of the king of ancient time which was Herod. Yet, Matthew mission was to introduce the Kingdom of God with his form and method however, from an evangelism and mission outlook. Second, is the invitation to follow Christ as disciples, this invitation to follow Christ, Bosh argues that Matthew’s Gospel was contradictory to the Great Commission call for a making disciples of all nations. Bosh says, “Chapter 10 relates sending out the twelve apostles (v. 2) to whom Jesus says, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles; and enter no town on the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the

⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 11.

house of Israel” (v. 5).¹⁰ He further states that Matthew’s community may have been so diverse that he spoke to each separately.

Matthew has another goal which is to do the will of God. This is dual that will be found in Matthew chapter 22:34-40. Jesus had just silenced the Sadducees and when the Pharisees heard about the indiscretion of this religious sect. One of them challenged Jesus by asking a question about the law and the greatest commandment. Jesus’ reply was astonishing; the greatest commandment is love. The first action of love from humanity should be to God. Humanity’s love should not be based on the fact that God extended a redemptive love through his Son, Jesus, neither is humanity’s love one of reciprocity. However, humanity’s love for God should be a genuine love because God created humanity. This love should be demonstrated with the life that we live in with study, prayer, fasting, meditation and reading the sacred text. In addition, to other materials that will help the believer to love God with their every fiber will move the church to grow. The second part is the love of neighbor. Jesus immediately talks about this love as a love that is equal to or greater than the love of self. This love of neighbor must not be contingent on anything the giver or receiver has done. It is relating to God and the love of Christ on the cross.

The love of neighbor points us in the Matthean text to the foundation of love which is found in the loving of a God. In the book of Matthew, Bosch recognizes the main themes of Matthew’s theology in relationship to mission. Bosch states there are several key concepts in the gospel of Matthew. “The most important of these concepts are the reign of God, Gods will, justice, commandments, the challenge to be perfect, to

¹⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 61.

surpass or excel, to observe or keep, to bear fruit and to teach.”¹¹ Looking at this biblical perspective of Matthew help one to understand the great need to follow the flow of the “Great Commission” found in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus’ declaration of authority and the sending of the disciple helps.

Bosch argues that the main three points of the Great Commission are making disciple, baptize and teach. The power was given to Christ and then Christ tells the disciples to go. This is significant for two reasons first, in the Gospel of Matthew the disciples operated with fear, unbelief, and the lack of representing Jesus. Yet, in the Great Commission, the first thing Jesus does is to transfer authority to the disciples to go. Notice, Jesus had power and authority through the narrative of Matthew. After-all he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and many other miracles in the present of the disciples and religious leaders. Sometimes Jesus did not want his power mentioned in the text but here he declares the power. Why? His power came though the struggles and the obedience before, during, and after the crucifixion.

Second, not only was power given to Jesus but this power is not limited. Jesus’ power reaches and covers heaven and earth, which is significant in sending the disciples. “Moreover, Jesus’ ministry heralds the redemptive possibilities of human community. His ministry for transformation and empowerment was actualized ultimately for the restoration of the human community, bringing oneness with God and wholeness with others.”¹² For Luke 8:4-15, simply put, the soil was waiting on the seed, and one needed to be a carrier of the seed, for the formation of the soil to produce.

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 66.

¹² Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *The Empowerment Church: Speaking a New Language for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 70.

Bosch's argument, although valid, is a little problematic for me because he does not consider the other commissions given in Mark, Luke, Acts, and John. Bosch primarily focuses on the Mathew 28 text that highlights the Great Commission only. For many, the current context may see that as the only commission but consider the following version found in Mark 16:15-20, Luke 24:45-53, Acts 1:7-8 and John 21:15-18, each of these have a "go" component. Seeing that each writer shares in the going in a different way helps to know the disciples are not limited to the expectation. However, this concept further strengthens Bosh's argument and moving to the making of disciples, baptizing, and teaching. This is truly the reign of God moving in mission. Carlyle Fielded Stewart III suggests, "the church exists to bring people to salvation in Christ and to positively and permanently change lives for good in the community."¹³ Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist evangelistic mission is that of the mission of God. "God's mission is larger than the mission of the church. The mission dei is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world and in which the church may be privileged to participate."¹⁴

Continuing further with the biblical perspective of mission, I continue to stress the importance of the evangelistic message being about God. The Theological evangelism provides an accurate record of revelation because of human interpretation. This human interpretation is sometimes flawed so the best one can do is pray that they are headed in the right direction in transformation.

¹³ Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *Street Corner Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 78.

¹⁴ Bosh, *Transforming*, 401.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the essential part of transformation. The reasons why the mission of God was slow moving prior to the birth and death of Christ was the absence of the Holy Spirit. For the first century church saw great evangelistic movements when the Holy Spirit moved amid God's people?

The church theologically looking at evangelism has not done a great job at education. It could be in part to the combining of mission and evangelism and not looking at the parallels but the different outcomes of each. The church has often combined the evangelism and missions; however, they are separate with different functions. Yet the outcomes for both should lead to a greater understanding of God. It is possible that the word "go," and witnesses can be misunderstood in the comparison of evangelism and missions. For continuity and clarity of thought, the Luke/Acts interpretation of the word "go," and witnesses will be used (Lk. 10:1-23) on evangelism and for "go," the Acts 1:1-8 mission will be used.

It also could be possible that the church considers the text the harvest is plentiful, but the labors are few as the excuse for the combining. Could this be the reason for combining evangelism and mission? How do they intersect and what are the outcomes? Well, when evangelism and mission meet under the umbrella of theology, this theological umbrella and the roads of evangelism and mission meet at the intersection of community using the vehicle of pneumatology. Dr. Robert E. Coleman in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* leads to a conversation.

"It is only the Spirit of God who enables one to carry on the redemptive mission of evangelism. Jesus underscored this truth early in relation to his own work by declaring

that what he did was in cooperation with “the Spirit of the Lord.”¹⁵ It was by his virtue that he preached the gospel to the poor, healed the brokenhearted, proclaimed deliverance to the captive, opened the eyes of the blind, cast out demons and set at liberty those who were oppressed (Lk. 4:18 and Matt.12:28). Jesus was God in revelation; but the Spirit was God in operation.¹⁶ The project operation will partner with the move of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s work for God’s church.

Evangelism

Evangelism and mission should be communal and not separate from community nor individualistic in thought, action, and deeds. This is a mutual meeting although the church intentionally gives little thought to the parallel and difference of the two. Leaders and ministers are accountable for the separation recognizing when they are operating in one or the other, both. It is possible to evangelize, and that evangelism can lead to mission and vise-versa. In the Bible, there is an account of God placing people together for specific reason. These reasons serve the purpose of God and the world.

When evangelism is mentioned in the church today a certain perception may be cast. One of separation, self-righteousness, and vainglory; however, the project is so important to the church. Partly, due to lack of training and resources those resources include, but are not limited to, training material, practicums and video’s that will help equip lay and ministers in evangelism.

¹⁵ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Spire Publishing Group, 1993), 52.

¹⁶ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 66.

However, the church has become an expert in one form of evangelism and that is congregation evangelism. I would like to define congregation evangelism from the current context, congregational Evangelism can be understood in its simplistic form as one beggar telling another beggar where to find some bread. However, churches never move beyond the walls of the congregation. “It all begins with the understanding of God as creative principle. Improvisation is freedom to step outside the status quo and create some of value which might free the status quo.”¹⁷ The local church must be creative. I would say the greater theological understanding of evangelism has four components or a common thread. The four components are meeting a need, call, and response along with follow-up the methods are different based on experience, history, the Bible, and theology. When you have the component together, there is a great chance that evangelism will be taking place. Evangelism must have the foundation of love and relationship. Love then recognizes the need not only to evangelize but the need to meet people where they are for relationship building. The evangelism pyramid is mutual from all involved parties along with the response which is mutual also. Lastly, is the follow-up evangelism which cannot be successful without some type of follow-up.

Dr. William Abraham, author of the book, *The Logic of Evangelism* offers some critical thought to the study of evangelism. Dr. Abraham suggests “that many churches do not see the importance of evangelism and it may not be taken serious in theological and ecclesiastical circles.”¹⁸ The reign of God should be the central and most important piece of the evangelism process. Evangelism and mission meet under the umbrella of

¹⁷ Stewart III, *Street Corner Theology*, 64.

¹⁸ William Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Dallas, TX: British Library Cataloguing, 1989), 45.

theology, but Abraham argues the lack of serious theologians that offer the same sentiments that I have. He says, “I consider it nothing short of disaster that evangelism has been relegated to the fringes of modern critical theology. For too long it has been handed over unceremoniously to those who have little interest in critical reflection and who therefore tend to use the trappings of scholarship as part of a public relations exercise.”¹⁹ Evangelism has not been taken seriously, according to Abraham but, until now with the increase of material and interest; but he is ready to make a difference.

Brian P. Stone’s *Evangelism After Christendom* helps us to rethink evangelism by asking the question, who see mission are we on when we consider the seriousness of evangelism? Some would argue it is the mission of the church. This may be the reason why local church evangelism is not effective. Stone also argues the focus of the church should be: the power of God demonstrated through obedience; the love of God and neighbor demonstrated through the Holy Spirit; and a beauty of holiness aesthetics more than just apologetics involving an epistemology.²⁰ Stone wrestling with the same question posed earlier whose mission are we on? Much more than individualistic thought, the church community must be the church who God has called. The church and the community of believers are shaped by the Holy Spirit and practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, forgiveness, repentance, worship, and what Jesus call the greatest of all commandments, love. The love of God with every fiber of our being and the love of our neighbors with the same love we have for ourselves.

¹⁹ Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, 2.

²⁰ Brian P. Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 31.

When the church practices what they preach love, peace, joy, and victory then it will live out its true meaning for assembling. Then the need for gimmicks and tricks will not be able to compete with the love and concern for the reign of God. *The Study of Evangelism* by Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner have compiled a collection of accomplished authors to talk about evangelism. Chilcote and Warner introduce six propositions concerning evangelism. They are:

1. Evangelism is a vital part of something larger than itself, namely the mission Dei. but one part of Gods larger mission in the world; it is the essence – heart - of all Christian missions.
2. Often the goal of evangelism is conversation
3. Evangelism is concerned with discipline people in Christ
4. Evangelism is orientated toward the reign of God
5. Evangelism missional practice of the whole people of God
6. Evangelism is missional contextual²¹

These six propositions help to set a new direction for evangelism in the Christian Church. The future of evangelism looks bright in North Georgia. The challenge for the context would be helping the church to the real value in training untrained clergy and members. Moving the church beyond the comfort and convenience of pew sitting to people engagement. Resisting the ease of staying a shut-in church and moving to becoming a Holy Spirit filled church. In his book *The Upside-Down Church* Greg Laurin talked to a group of pastors and shared this experience. He says, “Some time ago I was asked to speak to a group of pastors on the subject of church growth and evangelism. I told these

²¹ Paul Chilcote and Lacey Warner, *The Study of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), xxvi.

pastors the reason many of their churches were not growing was that many of them really didn't care about evangelizing lost people.”²²

As previously stated, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has failed to train clergy and laity around evangelism. So, evangelism becomes something to do out-side of Christianity. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has been its own problem created over twenty years ago. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church's failure to train clergy, members, and shutting the doors of the church from the inside out and with no training for church growth and revitalization, the church finds itself failing to become involved in God's mission of natural growth.

The project has the potential to help the church realize the upside of the example for church growth, planting, and revitalization. Laurie, also stated, “Later one pastor wrote me a letter saying, ‘My first reaction to your message was, ‘How dare you say to me, a pastor, a man of God, that I don't care about lost people?’ But I began to think about it. I began to pray about it. And I realized you were right. I cared about my flock and our own ministry but not the lost. ‘So, I asked God to give me a burden, and He changed my heart.’”²³

This experience can be unsettling for bishops, pastors and laity who believe they are doing the natural work of the church. However, Christian leaders are missing the natural mission for God's church. One of the toughest challenges within the context has been the lack of vision from bishops and pastors in the church. Like the experience Laurin shared in his book, some of the leaders have not come to the place of self-

²² Greg Laurie and David Koop, *The Upside-Down Church* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publications, 1999), 63.

²³ Laurie and Koop, *The Upside-Down Church*, 63.

realization. This is one of the reasons the project is needed in the Christian Methodist Episcopal church. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that will give guidance to get back to the understanding the mission for the church.

Before the making of disciples, teaching, and baptizing, the power of God must be recognized; and the power belongs to God. These contemporary developments are more than just methods of doing evangelism but examples for future generation to follow in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Christians leaders can then live out its true meaning for assembling. Then the need for gimmicks and tricks will not be able to compete with the genuine mission of love and natural church transformation and formation. Hearts will then be ready to hear and receive the word of God, in addition a concern for those who are lost.

Finally, it is important to be men and women of prayer. Pastoring will move one to depend on knee power. No great work has ever been accomplished for God outside of much time in earnest prayer, it was said of Jesus, “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mk. 1:35 KJV). It was also said of the early church, “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer along with the women” (Acts 1:14 NASB).

After a time of prayer, further plans for implementation must be put together, which include all the above tenets, but most include what is a few of the most important. Dr. Robert Coleman asks one to consider the prayer life of Jesus, the communication with his Father and the strength it gave him. Jesus was very intentional about prayer that he taught the disciples to pray. Colman says,

Jesus was determined to get his lesson across. Therefore, he emphasized the life of prayer again and again when talking with his disciples, continually enlarging

on its meaning and application as they were able to comprehend deeper realities of the Spirit. It was an indispensable part of their training, which they would have to transmit to others. One thing is certain: unless they grasped the meaning of prayer, and learned how to practice it with consistency, not much would come from their lives.²⁴

So, it is with the fervency of Solomon's request found in following his mandate to pray "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

For my project to move the hearts of God's people into service, prayer must be the foundation. The project must have a prayer component to help the church be alert and always praying for all the Lord's people. Historically, it was prayer and an unwavering faith that provided the foundation for congregations in the CME to come into existence. Sadly, the church has strayed far away from having prayer meetings, prayer partners, prayer teams, and seriously praying faithfully before undertaking any project, service, or business of the Lord in churches. Aside to pray for wisdom, guidance, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to assist my project in evangelism for church growth, planting, and revitalization efforts an example for local churches, pastors, presiding elders, general officers, and bishops of the Christian Methodist Episcopal church. It is my hope that clergy and laity view evangelism as a conscious and calculated lifestyle which is more than an event.

²⁴ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 73.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

The interdisciplinary field for my project is pedology. The study of soil and the format is important to the project as it intersects with the biblical context that Jesus teaches about in Luke 8:4-15, the parable of the soil and relationship of humanity. The soil becomes a particularly important topic for discussion. Jesus helps the disciples understand the meaning of the parable as Jesus deals with the whole person. In the context, the Jesus example helps to deal with the whole person, the system of quantitative pedology. It is important to understand the science of soil and the nature growth process of pedology will be ground-breaking for the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. An organic grass root example for growth will be presented based upon the interdisciplinary field of study. The formation of pedology is relatable anywhere you go there is soil. Many people understand the growth process and the need for soil in the process; but they fail to consider the obvious in growth related to the local church.

The Jesus example deals with people, process, and procedures. So, likewise the research will seek to answer the question. Why hasn't the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church grown? I will go through the process of answering the question of the project to bring real solutions. So, the new question becomes, why has the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church grown at Pleasant Hill.

This interdisciplinary field deals a lot with change that the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is afraid to confront. If the people in power cannot control the change, it is not welcomed, and thus the continued decline in the church. However, the change for the context will be gradual like those present in soil formation although some change can be major also catastrophic that has been taken into consideration. The project will address the small but consistent change in the people, process, and procedure at Pleasant Hill. Everyone that is involved will be welcomed. Being involved in this process is needed for consistent and constant dialogue and documentation. This will help leaders to learn what works in one area may not work in others. Just as components of soil in one area may be richer for growth than others. So, my leadership skills will be challenged within the project as well. Dealing with the problem untrained clergy and laity see evangelism as an event as opposed to a conscious and calculated lifestyle.

The other component in the project that will be addressed in time. As stated earlier, gradual change would be necessary so time will be important. Within the context, the management of change is vitally important and could be the result in the outcome of the project. The theory working with pedology as the interdisciplinary brings the project to life and witness for the church and not just mere words on paper for a grade; but to make a difference in the life and witness of the church. In Luke 8:4-15, the disciples asked what this parable meant, he said “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God, but for others they are parables” (NKJV Lk. 4:9). The text itself speaks about the soil in the parable Jesus says there were four different types of soil. However, to the pedologist the soil is one type with different proprieties, this can help in the project.

The growth will be natural and in accordance with God's mission for the church. Applying observable laws and paradigms of nature to theology is highly controversial. I concede the difficulty here. "This type of theological reasoning called *theologia naturalis* can create enormous problems when applied to theology proper, i.e., the knowledge of God.... However, we are dealing with principles of church growth not the question about the character of God."¹ The church has a natural process of church growth. Consider Jesus and the many uses of growth used in scripture. For example, principles the growth of fig tree, grow of the lilies of the field, growth fruit and trees, the healing of a man, workers in the vineyard and the mustard seed of faith research on the principles of growth can work within the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and for Pleasant Hill CME Church, my context. Even the church has a way of pedological sayings, you will reap what you sow, sow a seed into the ministry and countless other sayings. Jesus further explains the meaning of the seeds and soil and reminds the disciples of God's word.

One may assume all seeds are alike, but the seeds vary. The project research will lead to a more wholistic part of church growth, planting, and revitalization. When approaching this chapter, it is important to mention leadership from the interdisciplinary perspective. Jesus, as the leader, understood and recognized the needs of the people at that time. Jesus began to speak in a manner for the crowd that would help them to understand the importance of what he was saying. It will be important to speak the language of inclusiveness, which will be transformative with many functions and moving parts. Further, it will intersect defending the project not only before a peer associate,

¹ Christian A. Schwartz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Health Churches* (Carol Stream, IL: C and P Publishing, 1996), 8.

board of examiners and professional associates and the Christian Methodist Episcopal church.

Jenny Hans, author of *Factors of Soil Formation*, writes, “a system of quantitative pedology suggest agriculturists have long realized that many important properties of soils are inherited from the underlying rocks.....parent material, climate and organisms are commonly designated as soil formers or soil-forming factors. Since soils change with time and undergo a process of evolution, the factor time also is frequently given the status of a soil-forming factor.”²

However, change must be managed and the manager for change in the project comes from training the pastors who then will train others. Although many people see change as a negative infringement on their normal way of doing things or how things ought to be done. Change is great if it can be managed, and the vision of change can be precise and welcomed by all. Organizations spend hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars creating new logos, buildings, and marketing campaigns.

Changing the Landscape

In the local neighborhood there was a Wendy’s restaurant. The building was one of the first designs in the 80s. The company decided it was time for a change. So, for about a month the restaurant was closed, for a full and total make-over. Once the restaurant reopened, it was totally refurbished. In place was new curb appeal, dining area, parking lot, and procedures. However, the change was not fully accepted by the community because the employees were the same as Jesus mentioned old wine in new

² Hans Jenny, *Factors of Soil Formation: A System of Quantitative Pedology* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1994), 2.

wineskins. The culture was the same, attitudes were the same, slow service, bad service, and bad attitudes. The culture of the employees remains, which made the experience worst.

There are times when the church experiences the same outcomes. A bishop moves a pastor with hopes of a new and fresh start only for things to get worse at times. The transition was mismanaged. According to Dr. William and Susan Bridges, there are three phases that people need to see through change.

One of the greatest factors is time. Letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. This phase of transition is an ending and the time when we need to help people deal with their losses. Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new is not fully operational. We call this the “neutral zone;” it is when the critical psychological realignments and re-patterning take place. Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. This is when people develop the new identity, experience the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that makes change begin to work.³

Transition is a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world. One can say that transition begins with an ending and finishes with the beginning.

To make change welcomed and exciting a good leader is needed. Author Christian Schwarz says,

The key distinction is probably best express by the word in power “empowerment.” Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as “helpless” in obtaining their own goals and for filling their own visions. Rather, they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assist Christians to obtain the spiritual potential God has for them. “The pastor equips, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be.”⁴

³ William Bridges and Susan Bridges, *Making Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Philadelphia, PA: DaCapo Press, 2016), 5.

⁴ Charles Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Chicago, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1996), 27.

A leader who understands the vision is a God sized vision will empower others to help in the ministry. Just as soil is not interdependent of itself but needs all the nutrients minerals and sunlight to make it healthy, so must the leader. Now I am not offering change theory as a substitute for pedology. However, when you consider the change that is present in pedology a strong argument can be presented change does happen.

Schwarz continues the conversation he says, “Natural church development is not just one church growth method among many. It is a different theological paradigm altogether. It introduces a different way of thinking for Christians.”⁵ The process of the natural church growth is the mission of God. The church was birthed out of persecution, but it was natural growth that took place. Relationship building between those twelve men Jesus called to follow him was natural. All of us will follow someone in some form or way during our lifetime. Even as leaders are sometimes called to follow the lead of a person or procedure.

Christian Leadership Training

Another heading here on Christian leadership training? The next section deals with several more popularly written Christian books about church health and growth. You might use these materials as a bridge between the more social science resources and your own project.

To follow comes naturally, but leaders need to be trained. The disciples followed Jesus even when they did not know where he was going or what he was doing. Just as soil and soil properties follow a certain pattern in formation. For instance, the soil system

⁵ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 82.

begins with the surface layer, then organic debris, top-soil, sub-soil parent material, weathered rock and final the bed rock. Although there are many variations of color, texture, and variations of soil in the surface layer, all of this can be factored in due to geographical regions and climates, the system remains the same.

Following the natural pattern of soil formation, project begins with the surface. Again, God designed a pattern of church growth for leaders to follow, yet many leaders re-designed the pattern to fit themselves which leads to unhealthy churches. Hollis Green in his book *Why Churches Die* believes:

The church must not be too selective in evangelism. Every man must be reached with the gospel regardless of race, culture, language, or economic standing. Church men ought not, by decision or default, leave out any group of people in the outreach ministry. The redeeming blood of Jesus Christ was shed for every tongue, people, and nation. The obligation of the church is to minister and accept as brethren all who confess Christ as Lord. Their language, culture and racial groups are open to the gospel; and the church has an obligation to reach them with the gospel.⁶

Following God's plan for the church will work at Pleasant Hill CME. It will change my problem from "Why isn't the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church growing?" into a soluble question of, why is the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church growing, planting churches, and revitalizing churches? Jesus wanted his followers to obey him because in obedience they would carry out the plan of the Mission Dei. For three years, Jesus exemplified what it took to move God's mission forward. However, the example Jesus present is simple. The Jesus example was to be about the Father's business. The Jesus example is very practical, simple and life changing. However, many can be intimidated by this example because it involves a change of the institution norms and practices but

⁶ Hollis Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Pasadena, CA: Global Ed Advance Press, 2007), 36.

also of one-self which should be evident during the project. It is simply the people business. Yes! The people business.

What is the local church doing about the business of people? Jesus did great ministry and there is no doubt about that. He helped people to see what God wanted for their lives. Jesus was on a mission from God which was to assist in saving people (the world) and he was well prepared. Jesus spent time in prayer and trained others by teaching them to pray. Then, the disciples watched Jesus in the community and at the appointed time Jesus sent them out. Christians leaders can do that! Through prayer and imitating Jesus, one can win souls to Christ.

Lastly, how well do leaders understand the mission of the church and how is its success measured? Do either of these questions remind us that the evil one still wants souls? However, the church should want more souls. One can get them by practicing the Jesus example because there can be many examples of Jesus' life and ministry? You are right! So, the example is after the example of Jesus, to take care of God's business. He did this by being active and engaging himself in prayer, preparation, practice, preaching, teaching, and reaching. Now, the power of the Holy Spirit is with humanity and there is no greater power to assist with imitating the Jesus example.

Robert Coleman, author of *The Master Plan of Evangelism* says, Jesus made it abundantly clear that his life was mediated only through the Holy Spirit. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (Jn. 6:63). Therefore, even to begin to live in Christ one must be born again (Jn. 3:3-9). The corrupted human nature must be regenerated by the Spirit of God before it could be conformed to its true created purpose

in the divine image. Likewise, it is the Spirit who sustains and nourishes the transformed life of a disciple in knowledge and grace.⁷

Jesus explains the parable to his disciples in hopes of clarifying their part of the mission of God. Realizing Christians have this power to move the church in systematic growth makes the project exciting. Just as Jesus explains the parable, the seed being the word of God, the seed in my context is the word of God. The word of God has the power to change any situation; however, what does that mean to a church which was birth out of slavery in the nineteenth century? Whose existence has reached 148 years and has moved away from the founding of mission of God and has fallen into a sinking place of comfort and convenience.

Just as the reference to the word of God from the prophet Isaiah, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of God shall stand forever” (Is. 40:8). One component of evangelism is to share the word of the Lord. Failure to share the word of God continues to lead churches and even my project, being at risk for failure. Bill Easum gives a staggering testimony of the churches epic failure to share the word of the Lord. He contends “most mainline and established churches are dying because they only try to take care of their members. Three out of four will close over the next 25-30 years... Most mainline church are already irrelevant to the needs of postmodern people.”⁸ Michael W. Foss in his book *Power Surge*, says others have suggested that one-third of the more than 325,000 Protestant congregations in the United States will close their doors within the

⁷ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 65.

⁸ Bill Easum, plenary address presented in Lansing, MI, 1999.

next decade and that is a conservative estimate! Foss, goes into detail with statistics and ask his readers to consider the following sobering statistics:

- 91 percent of all households in the United States own at least one Bible
- 80 percent of adults name the Bible as the most influential book in human history
- Yet only 38 percent of adult's volunteer to help a church during a typical week
- 96 percent of adults believe in God
- 93 percent believe in the virgin birth
- Yet 39 percent say Jesus did not have a physical resurrection
- 61 percent say the Holy Spirit is not real
- 56 percent say a good person can earn his or her way into heaven
- And still 72 percent of those polled say that they are church members.⁹

What is going on here? How has this happened? What can we do about it? Why is biblical illiteracy rampant among those who call themselves Christians? Why does the Christian message, the good news of the gospel, not seem to get through? Why are mainline protestant churches losing more and more members? Is Christian faith no longer relevant? Is the church no longer effective in meeting the real needs of real people? These are questions that trouble the heart and minds of all love and serve the Lord of the church.¹⁰ Some of the questions asked of Foss and some of the ones that I have asked of myself, and my context is why Jesus express the seed being the word of God? Only the word of God can move God's people into a loving and effective relationship with God. So, the seed is planted into the hearts of people. Depending on the hearts (soil) it may or

⁹ Barna, "Data and Trends," The Barna Report, October 19, 1998, <https://www.barna.com/>.

¹⁰ Michael W. Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 3.

may not produce fruit? The parable give seed to the soil the description of the soil is being shallow, rocky, thorny, and good. One of the most exciting things about it is the hope in the text. Notice all seeds took root and grew; what we do not see in the seed experience in the surface layer and the organic debris.

1. The seed to root
2. There is growth taking place underneath the organic debris and the surface layer.
3. The seed grows down first, then the seed grows up. But not enough to break through the organic debris (not visible)
4. Once the seed breaks the organic matter, it may not be visible but its growing
5. The seed breaks the organic matter and then continues to grow and break the Surface layer (visible)

Some of the problems Foss and Green describe in their work is still prevalent today. So, my hope is for the continued growth of my project. I recognize that it is achievable but sustainable growth is what my project will produce.

Also identifying the mission of the church and the people, process and procedure is critically important to my project. I have identified the methods and modes by which my project will move. I have identified the place of my context and the holy scripture that will be the building steps for my project.

In addition, I have looked at my interdisciplinary work of my project being pedology. All this working together solves a real problem within the Christian Methodist Episcopal church. Why hasn't the Christian Methodist Episcopal church grown?" Doing the research, causes me to create an example for church growth, planting, and revitalization. Then along with my research and guidance with mentors, cohorts, and

associates, the question will become, why has the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church grown?

So, what to me would be the most critical part of my research? In accordance with the text and the interdisciplinary work will be teaching the difference between duty and relationship. The duty of the interdisciplinary research is to compare an outside discipline to my project and look at the similarities, differences, and threats that would advance or hinder the work of my project. One footprint can change the direction of the surface of the project. That footprint in moving to develop an organic and more natural way of looking at the before mentioned church growth, planting, and revitalization the footprint will change the direction of the church and at least start the conversation that leads to change. Although, keep in mind the surface layer is the layer we see and consist of organic matter. Yet, my project needs to take root and move to a deeper level of transformation. Moving in scientific terms reach to the topsoil, subsoil, parent material and bedrock. These six components of soil and the soil of the church which compares to the level in the organization structure bishops, general officers, judicial council, presiding elders, pastors, and laity. The local church in comparison for the project is the bedrock of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and if the church is going to experience vital church growth in the areas of church growth, planting and revitalization then my project must get deep enough to reach the 148-year-old (CME) bedrock that has been laying dormant in some cases. That is a tall task, however, as stated before God designed the church to grow naturally.

The mission of God is first and foremost to worship God authentically understanding this loving God, Creator of all humanity. Again, God has designed the

church, it will grow naturally. However, humankind have been designed to worship in the way church looks now. We live in a society where the expectation instead of authentic and true worship unto God is challenged. Jesus reminded the disciples in the book of John 12:32 and if he be lifted up, he will do the drawing of all humanity to him. I wonder if the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church failed to lift Jesus up. Here is what Schwarz has to say about it what he calls seeker services the term meaning: the church has a goal of reaching those persons who are non-churched.

In our research, we selected all churches which reported “a very strong” orientation towards reaching non-Christians in their worship services. We found the position that this position was not typical of any single category of churches, neither growing nor declining, neither qualitatively above average nor qualitatively below average. This term that the so-called “Seeker services” are not a wonderful evangelistic message that a church might consider emulating. It simply means that this form of evangelism cannot be classified as a church growth principle.”¹¹

Services may target Christians or non-Christians, their style may be liturgical or free, their language may be “churchy” or “secular”— it makes no difference for church growth. As Jesus explained the parable, it is the word of God that makes the difference. When considering text and context from this discipline, Jesus speaks moments of pedology in several biblical verses, and parables, for instance, Matthew 9:38, 12:33-37, 13:24-30 – Mark 4:1-9, 21-29, Luke 6:43-45, 8:4-15, John 15:1-8, these are only a few verses that mention or intentional speak of the soil science pedology in the New Testament. Was Jesus teaching a lesson of perseverance and patience? Jesus used the preceding verses to teach perseverance and patience. In order to reap a harvest, one must do the work of preparing the surface layer and it must be prepared for planting. Remember the surface layer is the layer of pedology that one witnesses.

¹¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 20.

In most cases, the preparation is important for growth. Looking at my interdisciplinary choice, the project will do well with a level of expected perseverance. Involved in the process is the need for consistent and constant dialogue and documentation. This will help me to learn what works in one area may not work in others. So, my leadership skills will be challenged within my project as well. As the project evolved from an idea, the understanding of the need for perseverance and the hunger to continue to see the project transform the church. Much like the bedrock, which is a deposit of solid rock, which is typically buried beneath soil and other broken or unconsolidated material. Bedrock is made up of igneous, sedimentary, or metamorphic rock, and it often serves as the parent material soil. Somethings will be difficult to move or change, which patience would be needed to make my project successful?

Jesus mentioned in a fig trees quandary in Luke 13:6-9, this parable teaches a valuable message on perseverance and patience from the Jesus perspective. Jesus spoke this parable, “Luke 13:6-9 New International Version (NIV) Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So, he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ““‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I will dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Although the theological meaning is of Israel, refusal to hear the word of God and except Jesus. The imagery in the text paralleled with the project in the context in a very real sense Jesus tells the parable helping to connect pedological moments. Notice the language! The man Jesus speaks of will instructs the servant to keep the tree down for its

un-usefulness over a period, however the keeper still has hope for the tree. The keeper asked for a change to “dig around and fertilize it” looking at this text from a different set of lenses. The surface lay, topsoil, subsoil, parent material which consist of weathered rock and bedrock needed transformation for the tree to show signs of life, health, growth, and fruit. The keeper identified the problem of this tree being a soil issue. In a very real sense, the keeper was going back to the basics from a gardening perspective or hitting the reset button so to speak. If the investment of time and skill did not help the tree then, he was willing to concur with the owner to destroy the tree.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church can become a healthy church. The project will help the church. The project helped me to see the church from an inverse perspective. The cost has been counted and the work of the context awaits a fresh voice. Not with a new message or gimmicks and tricks but reminding the people of God of the mission of the church is to win, save or point souls to God in a wholistic way. The church must look at the Jesus example, the project will do just that. God’s plan of church growth has many components: prayer, worship, building healthy relationships, leadership, ministry, and evangelism. Although there could be others added to this short list, the project has included many of these components. One must have the understanding that it is God’s mission and being God’s mission then must suggest we operated the mission of God in God’s way. God’s way is holistic that all will work together to deal with the social, physical, mental, and spiritual person as one.

The church must begin to look at the mission field as God’s Garden. In every garden, a gardener or farmer cultivates those plants considered beneficial and eliminates those considered harmful. As we know, Jesus used this imagery of the seed and the

weeds in several of his parables to talk about the reign of God. Finally, Jesus reminds his listeners that the seed has the power to grow on its own to full fruition (Mk. 4:26-29).¹² Although some growth can be exponential, that is not the growth my project will produce. The principles of pedology and growth can take a great deal of time. I must fully understand my context which this project has allowed me to do.

The Apostle Paul, one of the greatest evangelists in ancient times, helps us to understand the aspects of growth and time. Paul addresses the Corinthian Church in 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 (NIV) which states: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters are anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.” The principles of pedology and growth can take a great deal of time. However, when investing the time, it will teach pastors and laity to share their faith.

Bevans and Schroder have a form of twinning in this chapter they say, “Witness and proclamation go together. If the task of world evangelization is ever to be accomplished, we must engage in it together.”¹³ We must do it together as one human race not a sub-culture of race based upon region, color, or ethnicity but as the people of God seeking relationship for a better future.

According to Bevans and Schroder this is done with dialogue. However, somewhere in the process of dialogue, something is lost; and the message received and delivered is distorted when it comes to the church doing and being what God has called.

¹² Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroder, *Prophetic Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 112.

¹³ Bevans and Schroder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 65.

The message is getting from God to the people but not from the people to the people. The church must have the conversation and ask the question, what does the mission look like to God?

Conclusion

In conclusion, making proper adjustments and keeping an open mind to the change of the project and the use of people, process, and procedure the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church can begin to grow and become an intriguing part of the communities where we serve. The Christian Methodist Episcopal church has ignored the overall trend of declining churches in North America. The project is an example for raising awareness in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and the opportunities for evangelism in the areas of church planting, church revitalization and expansion.

Finally, understanding this example is intended to bring together corporations, businesses, and community leaders together to discuss and evaluate a potential plan for the community empowerment. The example should help people to become aware of community needs and participate in the action of advocacy which could strengthen the faith and business community. The project will be transforming the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church community holistically in respect to opportunities for evangelism in the areas of church planting, church revitalization and expansion church growth and neighbor helping neighbor, based upon this section of my project. “The church is considered as a human body and a growing garden. Perhaps men understand the nature of a growing garden better than they do the complicated mechanisms of the human body.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 197.

Green offers the same thought concerning the church in relationship to pedology with his observations. Since Green's argument is to understand the growing garden over the human body my project can offer a realistic approach to church growth at Pleasant Hill CME. To achieve that, I must teach pastors and laity the importance wholistic evangelism and sharing their faith so the church can experience sustainable growth. This project can be liberating physically, emotionally, physiologically, and spiritually. At the completion of the project, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and Pleasant Hill CME Church will be able to start the conversation and use the project as one of the examples for evangelism in the areas of church planting, church revitalization and expansion.

This project will not be without its challenges and critics. There are certain principles to anything that grows. The first act of growth is conception, every living thing will grow. For soon after conception, the first stage of growth begins. For those who argue against pedology might even argue with the creation stories or the miraculous birth of the Christ child. Partly, because of the theological argument as opposed to the principles of growth that will be applied to the church. Green offers the following perspectives, "The growth of a tree takes place in three places: (1) beneath the ground in the root supply system; (2) just under the bark in the support system, and (3) on the end of the branches in the fruit bearing system. All growth does not produce fruit. Some growth sustains life, other growth produces support, but growth in the fruit bearing region has a direct relationship to the perpetuation of life. All growth and development should concern the church."¹⁵

¹⁵ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 201.

Although Green's language may be different the basic principles and outcomes will be the same, which leads to bearing fruit. By using pedology as my interdisciplinary discipline for my project, Pleasant Hill can evangelize with the outcome being the acceptance of Christ. The acceptance of Christ from those who a community who is ready to share their faith with others. As J. L. Packer wrote: "We glorify God by evangelizing, not only because evangelizing is an act of obedience, but also because in evangelism we tell the world what great things God has done for the salvation of sinners. God is glorified when His mighty works of grace are made known."¹⁶

Pedology can be seen in the formation of human existence found in the book of Genesis when God formed man out of the dust of the ground. It was not until God breath spirit in humanity that life began. God is calling humanity back to God's self that we may glorify God through the sharing of our faith. Packer also suggest our responsibility to make God's grace known to others.

Pedology must be included into the conversation of theology, for if Christians believe the creation story, it is plain to see the intentionality of God in pedology. This evidence of God taking the surface lay, topsoil, subsoil, parent material which consist of weathered rock and bedrock to create humanity. This is evident to all that pedology belongs in the conversation of theology. As the preacher commits the body to the ground the words are spoken earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust. The agreement, by faith, God created from dust and humanity will return to dust is further evidence of pedology.

¹⁶ L. J. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 75.

My project of evangelism will create opportunities for church growth planting and revitalization. Just as the surface layer and topsoil is not deep enough to produce significant growth, all phases of growth must be considered. The surface lay, topsoil, subsoil, parent material which consist of weathered rock and bedrock. After research, training and application can my project prove its success or failure. However, I am fully persuaded that the project will turn the challenges into opportunities for further conversation. They will also be open to adjustments and improvising additions after completion of the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary. Clergy and laity may see evangelism as a conscious and calculated lifestyle.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

When someone asks me what I have done to impact the lives of others, what have I done to help the body of Christ, my answer will not be I do not know. Instead, my answer will be reflective of the life that I lived. It is my hope that my life will serve as a testimony to others. For me, faith sharing can be a great way to teach the gospel of Jesus the Christ. Clergy and laity must see evangelism as a critical and essential part of the faith process. Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) church must become a vessel for God to use in times like these. The CME church over several decades has focused exclusively on Christian education and formation, most of the funding goes to support this effort. If we going to train and teach, Christian education cannot work in a silo, evangelism must be the discipline to get the people in the pews. The church has taken a serious look at evangelism and reimagined what is needed for church growth, planting, and revitalization.

Evangelism now becomes part of conversations and planning especially during the Covid-19 pandemic for the local church. The Pleasant Hill Church has been forced to reimagine, reinvent, and restructure the way we reach people. We have been challenged by the way we think about those whom God loves. The church must look at evangelism and natural church growth principles. Pleasant Hill CME understands the power of prayer

which lays the foundation for future success. Although I mentioned success, it is not completed with human hands but with godly wisdom, the processes consist of planting evangelistic seeds and watching God give the increase. The participants eyes of understanding have been open because of my project. It has been beneficial in helping the participants to understand the mission of God and the mission of the church and the importance of sharing our faith.

The church spent critical time in prayer together as the body of Christ. We have pursued God for the growth, that only God can provide. By sharing our faith and loving God's people the church will experience growth. Unlike my experience at Fews Memorial CME Church when I accepted Christ, Pleasant Hill did more than just clap their hands. As the saying goes, job well done, that was the initial step towards salvation. Pleasant Hill embraced the people who wanted to unite with the church. By embracing them and showing the love of God. Members spoke about their growth to friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors who began visiting the church before Covid-19.

The church began to see the possibilities of church growth even during a pandemic and when some churches are dying and closing. Members learned how to share Jesus without fear and moved past excuses. I believe that prayer addressed the fear of the members which allowed them to look at evangelism and faith sharing differently. In everyday conversations, people were asked to acknowledge God and invite the Holy Spirit into the conversation, casually!

When talking about weather, sports, children, work, and school based upon any subject include God talk. Much like the text used for my project Luke 8:4-15. God's word were the seeds in the text, and the seeds were planted into the soil of the heart.

Methodology

I used mixed methods of gathering data to test my thesis which are pre and post-survey, interviews, Bible study, sermons series, spiritual gift survey, getting to know you spreadsheet, and exit tickets. I had the opportunity to enter my research with eighteen adults. Please see the demographic chart below.

Table 1. Demographic chart

Gender	Chair	Officers	Members	# Yrs. At Church	CME	Education	Bio- Vocational
6 males	2	0	4	105	Yes	Bachelor	4 of 6
12 females	8	4		30.75	Yes	D-Min	12 of 12

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	General Z	Generation Alpha
11	5	2	0	0

I did not ask for the ages of the participants I was mostly interested in the generation specifics. The numbers show a concern that has been consistent in other data. First, baby boomers are the largest generation in Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church consisting of clergy and laity. Generation X were a little under half of the baby boomers in my context. What was alarming was that the younger generations millennials and Z's only make up 36% (or two persons of the eighteen) for two generations. The research also shows that men continue to be in roles of leadership for

longer periods of time. However, even though women have not served as long as their male counterparts they are more educated than men. This could reflect the history of the church from its inception when women were not allowed to lead in the church until the early 1900s.

One of the tools used was the ice breaker, although many of the person who belonged to the church know each other by name. My project challenged them to dig deep into the clergy friend, pewmate, and colleague's life to build strong lasting relationships. These relationships allowed them to see each other's humanity and vulnerability. I believe it allowed the participants to take ownership in preparation for the worship. I knew the importance of proper communication. Therefore, it was imperative that each participant had information pertaining to the research project. The participants were introduced the workshop which came in the form of an invite letter. They also received a description of the workshop along with the subject matter. The participants were given a reminder as a marketing campaign that would keep the workshop date as a priority. The marketing campaign included flyers, and a video of the social media platforms. There was an ice breaker, for a few moments at the beginning of the workshops this helped set the atmosphere and plant the seed of dialogue. Following the ice breaker, a presentation was shared with all participants. They were also encouraged to ask any questions.

Participants were also given time to address any concerns they might have about the workshop and its implementation. Just before the participants left for the day, they were asked to complete an exit ticket. An exit tick provided basic feedback about the

workshop. Such as presentation usefulness and what the participant learned. Finally, it asks the participant to relate to the information that was shared.

Getting to Know You!

At the beginning of the workshop, I had a host to greet each participant welcoming them into the space. Although we knew each other's names, we used name badges for recognition. Once the seats were chosen, I greeted the participants and shared what they could expect. Then the fun began. I asked the participants to look in the packet in front of them and pull out their "Getting to Know You" sheet. After sharing the instructions, they were expected to simply go around the room asking each person if they done anything on the getting to know you page. The response was either yes or no; however, it was not about finding the answer. The getting to know you was about evangelism moments, helping the members to see how to engage someone. Challenging the participants to think of evangelism was an intriguing part of the believer's spiritual discipline. Below is the "Getting to Know You" exercise. The participants were expected to approach other participants, ask a question on the sheet, and respond by answering yes or no on the sheet. The participants were instructed not to write their names on the copy of the spreadsheet.

Table 2. Getting to Know You Sheet

Has been on a mission trip outside the United States?	Are you a part of an intercessory prayer team?	Have you led someone to Christ?
Have you ever passed out tracts?	Have you been on a prayer work in your community?	Would like to be a part of an evangelism team?

Have you been a part of a feeding ministry?	Have you attended a workshop on evangelism before today?	Do you know about the connectional prayer line?
Have you shared a personal testimony outside the local church?	Have you started a ministry to help others outside the local church building?	Do you know what "One Purpose, One Focus, One Voice" means?

After the completion of the “Getting to Know You” spreadsheet, the room was filled with excitement. It was important to make the participants aware of the choices they made in attending the workshop. Their participation was important not because of the invite, but their willingness to participate in making the workshop successful. In research, I learned if you could use those who see what you see and others who oppose you views but, have a love for the discipline of evangelism the output will be better for all involved.

Gathering information this way maybe a little different but this allowed the participants to engage with each other. The goal was to assure each participant understood that they were capable of building relationships, which could lead to sharing the gospel of Jesus the Christ. Jesus mentioned how the seed of the word of God are sown into the heart of humanity. In my research, I found like seeds sown into the ground the faith sharing experience offers the church the simplest way of experiencing evangelism and growth.

Although it might seem pre-mature for exponential growth as in the days of the establishment of the New Testament Church, the principles of growth can still be applied in the Pleasant Hill context. Evangelism is the vehicle that will drive the growth, it is also

important to note the interconnectedness of my context, scripture, and pedagogy. That is why this project is so personal for me and needed in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

Research Survey

For research purposes, a pre-survey was used to gather important information that would guide the discussion for the workshop. This method was chosen because of the group dynamics of learning. As information was gathered, I presented information pertaining to the survey and “Getting to Know You” spreadsheet. The following survey was used:

1. During a thirty-day period how often have you attended church before the Covid-19 pandemic?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Bi-weekly
 - c. Once a month
 - d. Never
2. During a thirty-day period how many times have you attend a virtual worship experience?
 - a. 0-6
 - b. 7-20
 - c. 20-50
 - d. Never
3. How important is growth in the CME Church to you?
 - a. Not important
 - b. Somewhat important
 - c. Important
 - d. Very Important
4. Were you adequately trained for the position you hold in your local church?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
5. Would you like to receive more training if offered to you about your role in the CME Church?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Did you attend a new member training class when you joined your local church?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. How often do you hear sermons on evangelism and missions?
- a. Never
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Frequently
 - d. Unsure
8. On a scale of one to ten with ten being the highest, how comfortable are you in sharing your faith with strangers?
9. Do you think the local church has opportunities for growth?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
10. In one sentence tell me how you would you help your local church grow?

The first question looked at two things. First, it viewed the current context of the coronavirus and its effect on church attendance in-person and virtual worship. Second, it viewed how often the participant went to their church. Gaging the importance of social change was important, although Covid-19 was present at the start of my project, the impact will affect the outcome of the research. The first question also gave more latitude for the participant to look at a time that is important to them by asking over during a thirty-day period. However, the question was not limited to worship alone. I believe it made the participant think about any meeting attended, ministry or outreach at the church, Bible study, and choir rehearsal.

A new dynamic has challenged my project which is Covid-19. I could not ignore the reality of this virus and the impact it has on evangelism and church growth. Covid-19 has become a game changer for the church because the virus has changed the way we

worship with our church being temporarily closed we went worship via conference call at the beginning of the pandemic.

The survey is specific to the Pleasant Hill Christian Methodist Episcopal Church which is intended to cause the participants to take a reflective look at the church. The participants are expected to take a stare not a glance to see what others might see and what church members may dismiss as normal, the new normal has been considered during the survey. I also asked the following questions to remind the participants of the multiple facets of humanity. Who are you according to science, religion, the Bible, and culture? I wanted the participants to know that they are the sum of both parents. They are the sum of rites, rituals, responses in community, God's love, and a race or class of people. During the presentation, many of the participants were quiet and were in observation mode. I wanted to allow the participants to also understand we are more than enough to do the work of evangelism.

Spiritual Gift Survey

It is important the participants understood we have spiritual gifts that can help us to be effective in evangelism. We did get a chance to fill out the spiritual gift inventory and discuss the importance of discovering their gifts. It is helpful to know what strengths and weakness are within the body of Christ. The gifts inventory can be a compilation of Pleasant Hill gift to the body of Christ and the community. Below is the Spiritual Gifts Inventory, Short Form.

A method to help you discover your gifts. Check the items which best describe you.

1. _____ I prefer ministering by myself rather than in a group. G

2. _____ People often say I am impulsive and direct. A
3. _____ My financial resources are above average. A
4. _____ I like to counsel people on a short-term basis. D
5. _____ I am a task-oriented person. G
6. _____ I love directing other people's work. B
7. _____ It is natural for me to show kindness to people. E
8. _____ People learn easily from me. C
9. _____ I can be very persuasive. F
10. _____ More than 10 percent of my income goes for Christian causes. A
11. _____ People often follow my advice. D
12. _____ I normally use several books in lesson preparation. C
13. _____ I like to recruit and lead people. B
14. _____ One-on-one relationships are important to me. E
15. _____ I possess a variety of talents and abilities. G
16. _____ I want to measure everything by God's Word. F
17. _____ Material possessions do not mean much to me. A
18. _____ Discouraged people are encouraged by my words. D
19. _____ Being accurate and truthful are important to me. C
20. _____ I love the challenge of accomplishing an organization goal. G
21. _____ Other people's spiritual welfare genuinely concerns me. D
22. _____ I usually make quick decisions. F
23. _____ I look for ways to help the unfortunate and downtrodden. E
24. _____ Criticism does not bother me. C

25. _____ I often volunteer my time and talents to worthwhile causes. G

26. _____ I am usually self-confident. B

27. _____ I do not expect repayment for favors I do for others. E

28. _____ I enjoy being responsible for the success of the group. B

29. _____ When a question about truth comes up, I am normally right. F

30. _____ Deadlines challenge me, and I usually meet them on time. B

31. _____ People in pain are comforted by my presence. D

Total your checks: A _____, B _____, C _____, D _____, E _____, F _____, G _____

Recording a 3, 4, or 5 after a letter indicates a Spiritual Gift.¹

Explanation

For Short Spiritual Gifts Inventory

A. Giving

You contribute material resources and do God's work with liberality and cheerfulness.

You contribute sacrificially, motivate others, and do not shun pressure or publicity.

Romans 12:13 – "Share with God's people."

B. Administration

You lead and communicate in such a way that people work harmoniously to reach goals

for God's purpose. You enjoy being a leader and can endure adverse reaction to get the

job done. You enjoy seeing tasks complete; can set guidelines, schedules, and policies;

and can delegate to get the work done. Romans 12:14 – "Bless those who persecute you."

C. Teaching

¹ Chris Joiner, *Discovering Our Place in God's World and in Development of Church Officers in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (Memphis, TN: Discipleship Ministry Team, CPC, 2012).

You communicate the truth with obvious results. You believe your gift is foundational and work systematically and with accuracy. Romans 12:11 – “Keep spiritual fervor.”

D. Exhortation

You minister by giving comfort, consolation, and encouragement so people feel helped and healed. Problems are only challenges, and you are drawn to those seeking spiritual growth. You can share personal failures to prompt others to talk. Learning and teaching practical information is your desire. Romans 12:12 – “Joyful, patient and faithful.”

E. Mercy

You feel compassion for those who are suffering and perform deeds to reflect God’s love. You are naturally drawn to hurting people, sensitive, giving, loving and desire healing. Romans 12:15-16 – “Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with mourners, live in harmony.”

F. Prophecy

The goal of those who have the gift of prophecy is to bring persons face to face with God. You discern, reveal motives and actions, have strong convictions and a need to express them. Impulsive, direct, and persuasive, you normally are a strong person. Romans 12:9 – “Love must be sincere, hate evil, cling to good.”

G. Serving

You identify and meet the needs of others using personal as well as other resources. You see needs and enjoy responding. You work best short-term and alone (do it now and quickly). You possess endurance and stamina and tend to do too much. Romans 12:10 – “Be devoted, honor one another.”²

² Joiner, *Discovering Our Place in God’s World*, 5-6.

Although such a survey is extensive, it was important enough to show how we can apply, and mis-apply the gifts and graces that God provides to us. Also, we can sometimes operate in an area of ministry that may not be our gift. It can also show how we use the knowledge of our gifts to enhance the ministry. The pastor and laity must know where they are spiritually located. Complementing gifts work better to accomplish the job. Helping us to become an example of evangelism for church growth, planting, and revitalization within the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

Implementation

Our meeting location was in a neutral place away from the church in hopes that the attendees would become more relaxed. I arrived hours earlier than the start time, first to pray, second to prepare the meeting place, and finally to relax and walk through the project outline that took place. I need to model what I was asking the participants to do. The meeting started at 8:00 a.m. with a short devotion in another location. The purpose of the devotion which included a hymn, prayer, and scripture this was to set a tone for our day.

After the devotion I went to the room as the participants arrived. They were greeted by me and the hospitality team. This team consisted of two volunteers whose job was to make the participants feel welcomed and appreciated. I walked around to greet everyone in the room using radical hospitality as my guide. The room was arranged in the shape of a U with me at the front of the open section on the U. This was allowed for participants to look at each other and create a much warmer and friendly atmosphere. Each participant could choose their own seat at the table. At their seat was a manila file

folder a small bag of candy which included, chocolate and peppermint. The contents of the folder included:

1. A letter of what you could expect
2. A schedule of events
3. The icebreaker, getting to know your questionnaire
4. A survey to rate the experience
5. An exit ticket that asked more specific question about me, as the facilitator, and material used for the workshop
6. A pen with an evangelism message and small note pad to take copious notes

After prayer, I asked each participant to open the folder and take out the “Getting to Know You” sheet. The instructions were to move around the room and find someone who completed the phrase that was in the box then move to another person. After the completion of the “Getting to Know You” exercise, I shared with the participants they had participated in an evangelism moment. We had a good laugh and answered a few questions. After the questionnaire, my fifteen-slide presentation via PowerPoint was presented. Each slide was independent but correlated into a single idea. The first slide was the title side which presented the leadership of the church and the why, what, where, when. It also reflected on the way the workshop was conducted. The second slide was the vision and mission of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The third slide contains a definition of leadership I wrote in 2014 which states, the church needs leaders that are not afraid to go beyond the normal and mundane. Leaders who are willing to allow God to remake them over and repeatedly. We need leaders that can hear the voice of God and respond to the voice in obedience; leaders who are not afraid to let others lead yet, knows

when to take the reins. After a brief discussion about leadership and evangelism, I mentioned evangelism needs courageous leader.

The next slide pressed the presentation on reiterating what to expect, the importance of open and honest dialogue, the goal to depart with more knowledge than you entered with, to view this research as a challenge to grow your faith and to see the church from the perspective of expectation and participation. There were a few expected outcomes that each participant will leave with more knowledge and to challenge each other to grow in faith and create a positive change.

The importance of what to expect is critical to my project. It lays out specific expectations for me as the facilitator and specific expectations for the participant. Although some expectations were expressed verbally, I chose to put the same or similar expectations in the PowerPoint presentation. The next couple of slides discussed the subject matter “A Way Forward: Vibrant Worship.” The sharing of the powers of three’s helps the participants to look at evangelism in practical ways. I suggested that all participants get a three-minute prayer, conversation, and follow-up to be used as we meet people. It is my hope that each participant used this example to engage in faith sharing encounters. Although the workshop theme and my project title may not be the same, the principles are the same. I shared the power of the threes, the title itself causes the participants to be even more interested in the content. The power of the three’s was a vision given to me from the Lord to help bring forth practical ways to look at evangelism.

The first slide was to prepare a three-minute prayer. I introduced the thought that sharing one’s faith to prepare a three-minute prayer. This prayer can or cannot be scripted, the prayer is to be used during an encounter with someone when sharing the

message of Jesus, the Christ. The importance of the prayer in evangelism is critical for we do not depend on our own ability to do God's work. God provides direction to lead us in building relationships. I challenged the participants to build relationships with persons just as Jesus built relationships and did ministry. People do not mind you praying for them, but we must learn to build relationships as well. The concept of a three-minute prayer is to meet the need of a person.

Everyone is extremely busy, with all that is happening in our society the racial unrest, political unrest, and Covid-19. It becomes important that we maximize the time we have when sharing our faith. I instructed the participants to have an organized conversation and allow an organic conversation to occur. My suggestion was to ask the following questions inside the conversation. The first question was most important to have an authentic way of building relationships. The questions began with what is your name? This offers the respondent the opportunity to own part of the conversation especially when you use a person's name in a conversation. I suggested that the participants exchange names. The second question was what was your story? This question normally stumps the participant; however, when sharing your faith be ready to explain what is expected with this question. I suggested responding with the story of your life, day, week, or month. I also encouraged the participants to listen intently using the name of the person to let them know you are listening. Participants were advised to be patient and do not interrupt. They were also encouraged to give space for the respondent to talk. If the respondent asked a question, I suggested the participants to answer that question only. After engagement, the participant should ask how can I contact you later? Like the other questions, this question was important for evangelism and relationship

building. Follow-up is critical because the nature of the contact and the unscheduled conversation. So, participants were asked to get, phone number, Facebook, Instagram, or other social media information for follow-up.

Although the total amount of time is nine minutes using the presentation, with the power of the three's the participants understood the suggested time of three-minute prayer, conversation and follow-up is not stringed enough for adjustments depending on the person. The thought was to bring a simplistic way of helping the participants to understand faith sharing is not separate from our spiritual discipline but is a part of the spiritual discipline.

Before moving to the next slide, we did a practicum. I asked the participants to find someone and practice the power of the threes. An example of evangelism for church growth, planting, and revitalization in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church begin to open the minds of the participants that evangelism is more than an event. The next slide details evangelism for my project. Evangelism is a lifestyle of conscious calculated decisions under the direction of the Holy Spirit. With this thought, I shared the following about evangelism.

1. Evangelism must be God lead.
 - a. I often reminded the participants of the first and foundation aspect of evangelism must be prayer. If we are to do anything for God, we must hear and talk to God.
 - b. With God leading our evangelism efforts we can understand what Paul says to the Corinthian church “some water other plant, but God gives the increase” (1 Cor 3:6-8).

- c. According to the Great Commission we are called to “Go,” our going is not of ourselves but, of God. When Jesus spoke those words, He was commanding all Christians to reach out and witness. Witnessing begins in your home, your church, your school, and your community. You are now ready to be about your father’s business, reaching out to those who have not heard the good news. There is no end to learning God’s message and no end to witnessing the same. God is never through with us.
- 2. Christians must gain greater knowledge of the need for evangelism.
 - a. People need God; however, some may not be aware of their need for God.
 - b. We must not lose sight of 1 Cor 9:27 (But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified).
 - c. Participants need to help others see what you see.
 - 3. What is our mandate for effective evangelism?
 - a. What does the Bible say?
 - b. If you want the enemy to win keep your mouth closed.
 - c. How do you know when your living evangelism moments and experiences?
 - d. Evangelism is not an event but an experience to be lived out daily.
 - 4. Getting to the root of the matter!
 - a. Identify your targeted audience children, youth, young adults, adults’ senior adults.
 - b. What specific gender men, women, or co-ed evangelism?

- c. Customize your ministry to fit the current need.
- d. Do not change the message. Jesus Saves!
- e. Follow up is critical and important for the success, use prayer, phone calls social media to stay connected.

The presentation began to take shape in a new direction in the room and new thought about our approach to evangelism in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Silence entered the conversation and then suddenly out of nowhere a participant responded Rev. Moore stated all this sounds good and no doubt our church needs this. The question was asked how can we implement this when our leaders do not want change? Excited about the question, I responded with the Pew Research which stated that the church decline in major mainline denominations. I believe it is a matter of life and death. I asked this question do you think our church is growing or dying? They replied “dying,” I said “correct.” I also commented, we cannot allow the church to die on or watch. Prayer must be the foundation and evangelism the vehicle. A brief conversation among the participants ensued within the room. This allowed me to segue into the next slide. Again, reiterating the need for prayer. The participants were encouraged to pray, study, and reach.

The participants were encouraged to pray for guidance. Always pray as you continue your journey thanking God for His blessings. Christians should pray to establish an ongoing relationship with Christ. God likes to hear from us, only through love for Christ and commitment to share the good news then evangelism will be effective.

The participants were advised to study to learn biblical scriptures and how certain scriptures apply to your life. Careful study will ensure that Christian literature is practical

and easily understood. Adults should always make themselves available to answer questions and provide information designed for youthful understanding.

Participants were encouraged to reach out and search for the lonely as God intended. “Go to people of all nations and make them my disciples..... and teach them to do everything I have told you....” (Matt. 28: 19 NIV)

We continued to dialogue for the next few minutes I asked the participants to get into a group and discuss the information that was shared. When the small groups came back together into the larger group the discussions were positive. As I moved toward the end of time together, I presented a few more slides I thought would be instrumental.

The next slide was titled the “Great Divide.” The information looked at the internal and external working of the current context of the local church. How those outside the four walls of the church view the church? How those inside the walls of the church see themselves in the community we currently serve? The interesting part about this slide was the severe contradiction between the view of those in the community and what the participants had to say about the church. The participants thought very highly of themselves and the job they were doing moving to the mission of God and the mission of the Church. Below is feedback from the participants as it relates to the congregation members and others.

Figure 1. Participant feedback regarding congregation members and others

What others say?	What the congregation say?
I think	We are a good Church
I heard	We have a good choir
I was told	We are friendly
They tell me	We know why we exist

However, the congregation and the community seen the church from two different perspectives. I shared an experience I had when I was appointed to a local church. I had been pastoring this church for a few weeks and I wanted to know what the community said about the church. One day after my office hours, I walked around the community. I asked several people do they know where I can find a church. I said I was new to the neighborhood and wanted to find a place to worship. It may be strange for some people to do such a thing but, this was exciting to me. One person directed me to a church a few blocks away. Another did not know the location of a church, although the church was less than forty yards from where we were having the conversation. I asked the person about the brown building that I had been appointed to serve as pastor. He replied by stating, “I think that is a funeral home. I see people over there some time, but I think it is a funeral home.” The room gasped from this part of my testimony.

During the workshop, I informed the participants that it is important to know what others in the community think about the church. The next day we had Bible study at the church I was just appointed to. I proceeded to ask the congregation what they would say about their church. The answer was astonishing because no one replied from the congregation. I stayed at the church for seven years. When I left the community and the congregation, the elementary, middle, high school, the university, the police chief, mayor city council, and school board members did not know about this church and its mission. I shared with the participants if you believe the church was dying it will die, but prayer, and evangelism can breathe new life and change the voice of the congregation.

I asked the participants to take good notes to refer to them later. There is a reality in the local church that does not align itself with the community. Church members often

say that we have a good choir, and a good church. Church members reflect on the fact that they are a friendly congregation; and they know why they exist. However, it does not match the community saying. I think is a church. I heard it was a church. I was told it was a church. They tell me it is a church. It seems to me that the church is not concerned about the community. I received applause but that was not necessary at that time because there was work to be done to bridge the gap with church and community.

The next few slides moved in the direction of the local church. It was titled “Power of the Local Church.” Each bullet point sought to address the possibilities and what the church could consider.

- The church is expected to function as the body of Christ. The body of Christ, like I mentioned, before has many moving parts. Each part has a specific function but is interconnected to each other for the health and well-being of the whole. Remember that evangelism is God lead.
- The church is expected to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The local church is given power and authority by the Triune God. The Holy Spirit provides all we need to do the work of an evangelist and make full proof of our ministry. The Holy Spirit is our teacher in all things concerning Jesus the Christ.
- The church is expected to be grounded in faith for growth to occur. Faith and hope remove despair; so, despair may not take up a temporary residence. Faith in the God who formed humanity from the dust of the earth and breathed life into them. I shared one of the reasons for coming to United Theological Seminary was because of the group Rooted: Church Planting and Revitalization in Our Diverse World.

- The church is expected to be committed to prayer. I cannot stress enough the importance of prayer. I offered a few suggestions before we began in the direction of evangelism for church growth. First that we should be cautious of what growth we are seeking. Second, be specific in the growth we expect. The participants were encouraged to be aware of the targeted audience and the goals to be reached. I suggested we pray for at least thirty days before, if possible.
- The church is expected to be designed for a specific community. Our church serves the community that God has placed the church in. Therefore, the priority must be to build relationships, ministry, and outreach that the community can value and appreciate.
- The church is expected to function with all hands-on deck. The participants understand that everyone has a job and role in church growth, planting, and revitalization. No one is insignificant. Every voice is needed to fulfill the mission of the church to go preach, reach, and teach each person how to share the love of God.

As we began to wrap up, I presented a power-point slides with several images. One image was of praying hands. Another image was the word focus in a box, looking out of focus until it came in full focus. The next image was the word “faith,” followed by the word image “response” with red letters and white silhouette. The final image was a man casting a large net into the water at sunset from his boat. I asked the participants to create a sentence using all images. Yes, those were the only instructions no exceptions make a simple, compound, complex or compound-complex sentence. The reasoning behind the

images and the request to make a sentence was simple. I needed to show the group that we all see things differently.

Evangelism is about seeing what God shows you. Although some of what we see may be different to others. What was alarming to me was those who went from right to left working to put the sentence together. Some managed to formulate a sentence while other struggled. A few participants started from the last image, middle, another image to formulate their sentence. Those who formulated their sentence using a right to left pattern said that was not fair. I simply restated the instructions and reminded them everyone sees thing differently.

The workshop was closed out with a question-and-answer period. The solemn reminder that we are mere servants paving a way for those who come behind us. As I stated in my presentation on evangelism, I am reminded to follow my own advice to follow-up with those who gave of their time. I followed up with an e-mail and the post survey along with my appreciation. Along with expectations from me and what to look forward to later.

The Virtual Sessions (Bible Study) - July 6, 2021

We also meet on the Zoom platform and conference call with a four-week Bible study session on evangelism. The objective of the Bible study was to gather additional information for the participants about their view of evangelism during the Covid-19 pandemic. The scripture text from the gospel of Luke 8:1-15. The first night of the session I facilitated a conversation from Luke chapter eight versus one-three. I asked for a reader and one of the participants read the versus, then I asked all participants what

those verses mean from an evangelism perspective. Each participant was asked to keep an open mind. The following are some of the responses.

1. Jesus is preaching a revival.
2. The verses reminded me of a crusade like Billy Graham used to do.
3. Women financed the ministry of Jesus to help him do the work.
4. I wonder which Herod is the text mentioning.
5. Those who Jesus healed and built relationships followed his ministry.
6. Mary Magdalene received complete healing.

The participants continued to discuss what they had seen in those verses until I made the following observation. Did you see chapter eight, verse one, opens with the following words “After this.” Participants in the Bible study did not pay attention to those words “After this.” Those words raised awareness that evangelism moments always follow meeting the need of people. I mentioned Luke 7:48-50 for two reasons. First, to examine the fullness of chapter eight, then to enlist the text to help Pleasant Hill see the greater need for living evangelism.

July 13, 2021

We meet again on July 13, 2021, to discuss verses four, five, and six. Excitement was building, although we were not in person their voice and faces displayed the excitement of the lesson. We began with a brief recap from July 6, 2021. They were prompted to share what they remembered from the following week, which included answering any questions the participants had from the previous Bible study. After following up with the group, we began to examine verses four, five, and six which states,

“While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.”

The Bible study participants were asked to think about the community and the ways we evangelize at Pleasant Hill CME Church from these verses. Someone asked a question “why did Jesus stop?” stop what, someone replied. Then the person who asked why Jesus stopped said, “Last week we saw Jesus going from town to town, this week we see the people gathering where Jesus was. Jesus must have stopped. “Why did Jesus stop?” As the facilitator my response was, great question, now let’s answer it from an evangelistic and faith sharing perspective. The need to answer the question was placed back on the one who asked. Why do you think Jesus stopped, I asked? Her response was to teach the people. Ok, great was my reply anyone else want to respond? Another replied because, they heard he could heal. We did not get to verse five and six. We continued the conversation on verse four until Bible study ended.

July 20, 2021

Bible study was on conference call we used our dedicated number to host the meeting. The starting point was versus five and six with the hope of moving onto verses seven through ten. The conversation started with a recap from the following week. Then we moved to verse five and six, with the question being asked, how can we evangelize people we never meet? The reply was to build an authentic relationship, where you can

openly share Jesus without fear. As the facilitator, I shared a few observations for the text about relationships.

1. The relationship between Jesus and the disciples.
2. The relationship between the Sower and the seed.
3. The relationship between the seed and the path.
4. The relationship between the birds and the seed.
5. The relationship between the rock and seed.

For the remainder of the night, we talk about the importance of relationship for evangelism. An excellent question was injected in the conversation, which was pastor “What is the Church (Pleasant Hill) relationship with the community? My reply was not good! But it can get better.

July 27, 2021

On this day we talked about the following verses although this was the last date set for the Bible study, it became very clear to all participants we need to continue this Bible study and the conversation.

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.” His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,” ‘though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand (Mk. 4:8-12).

At this point in the Bible study, we talked about the good soil, the harvest, and the question of hearing what God has called us to as a local church living in evangelism moments. Although some participants were excited about the yielding of the crop, an important take-away was hearing. They were reminded that hearing must be intentional

and move to do the work of evangelism, the church must be the sower with an expectation of growth while sharing our faith. During the end of Bible study the participants received a spiritual gifts assessment. This was to see if they obtain change from the last assessment.

Sermon Series

The month of July was dedicated to evangelism not only from Bible study, but in morning worship. Worship as we know it has changed to fit the model of living out evangelism moments. Due to Covid-19 the congregation is not worshipping in the building yet, but we have our service pull-up and praise, Zoom, and Facebook live. Many in our congregation remain in their cars during worship while others are on social media. Over the last few months several people have joined us in our new setting. Many we would not have reached if we were in the confines of the church building. The first two weeks preaching was done from Luke 8: 1-16. On July 4, 2021, I offered the following thought as a title for the sermon “Do you know where you’re going! See outline is below

- I. When the two became one
 - a. Defining Evangelism
 - b. Defining Mission
 - c. How do you know what you know?
- II. Meet me at the crossroads
 - a. The parallel and comparisons
 - b. Intersecting and the outcomes
 - c. What happens at the intersection?

III. Now that you know “GO”

- a. The outcome of an effective mission minded church
- b. The outcome of an effective and efficient evangelistic church

IV. Questions and Answers

- a. When the two became one.

The Church needs leaders that are not afraid to go beyond the normal and mundane. The church needs leaders who are willing to allow God to remake them over again. Leaders that can hear the voice of God and respond to the voice in obedience; leaders who are not afraid to let others lead yet, knows when to take the reins. Since the mid- twentieth century, the church has combined evangelism and mission. If you consider the reality of each ministry, they are parallel but, must be approached differently because of forms, functions, and outcomes. Today we will take a critical examination of the two and how the church views them. How the minister must strive to make the distinction between evangelism and missions and the integrity of both, while creating and effective and efficient outcomes.

How do we define evangelism? “GO” In order to define evangelism we must consider the components, such as worship, proclamation, song, prayer, and discipleship. So, in defining evangelism consider this thought. Evangelism is the community of believers who recognize God as the focal point of Holy speech about the Trinity compelling those who are weakened by the world and need a sacred space and place within one’s personal theology and communal accountability to bring others in community and those outside of community to a centering moment of examining who

God is in worship, proclamation, song, prayer, and discipleship that the community of God may be strengthened.

How do we define mission? To define mission, we must consider whose mission we are on. Now consider mission as the appointed assignment to “Witness” where one is sent for the purpose of sharing God’s love to reform and prepare for the reign of God. Within region, community and individual; it’s social, religion, education, political and economic. Preparing this and others for the way of the Lord in governing the life of God’s people, like evangelism one must consider worship, proclamation, song, prayer, and discipleship in the process of mission.

The church has often combined the evangelism and missions. Yet the outcomes for both should lead to a greater understanding of God. It is possible that the word “GO” and witnesses (faith sharing) can be misunderstood while comparing evangelism and missions. For continuity and clarity of thought we will use Luke/Acts interpretation of the word “GO” and witnesses. It is possible that the church considers the text the harvest is plentiful, but the labors are few as the excuse for the combining. Could this be the reason for the combining of evangelism and mission?

When evangelism and mission meet yes, there is a time when the two disciplines of the Church meet. They meet under the umbrella of theology. This theological umbrella and the roads of evangelism and mission meet at the intersection of community. Evangelism should be communal and not a separate form of community nor individualistic in thought, actions, and deeds. This is a mutual meeting although the church intentionally gives little thought to the parallel and difference of the two. Leaders and minister are accountable for the separation recognizing when one is operating in one

or the other or both. It is possible to evangelize, and that evangelism can lead to mission and vise-versa.

What happens at the intersection? An awareness of liberation for the community is important and needs to happen at the intersection. Yet there are other choices at the intersection. Do you remain the same, does one seek a greater understanding, and do you choose to liberate others? What makes you or your church mission minded? The outcome of an effective and efficient Evangelistic church. What makes you and your church evangelism minded?

This sermon outline was written to assist the congregations in understanding about the New Testament focus on evangelism. The approach of the sermon was a pinpoint focus on evangelism then widen the focus to a companion discipline missions or missiology. The sermon intended to bring the point if God is concern about reaching others we must be too.

Summary of Learning

Workshop

Many of the participants came to the workshop with knowledge of evangelism either by experience or story. We learned to be open to the power of prayer to move evangelism by way of church growth, plant, and revitalization. The church does not operate in silos but as the body of Christ. The mission of the church can be found in several areas. First, inside the wall of the church through worship and proclamation. Second, in community where the work of ministry takes place. It is important for us to

understand we can do more together. One of the closing slides I asked the following critical questions.

- How will I share all what I learned?
- How can evangelism provide formation of the whole person?
- If I am to teach and be effective at teaching, how do I choose a model that will fit the target group?
- What careful planning, thought and evaluating outcomes must be considered?
- How important is relationship building in evangelism?

It is also vital to measure the teacher's message and how that message was received. I asked the participants to wrestle with these questions and not allow us to meet for the sake of coming together but to really wrestle with these question and others they many have concerning evangelism to make a different in the local church and community.

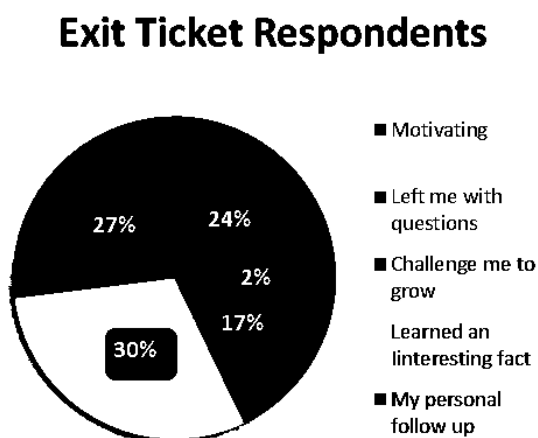
All participants agreed that we have not done enough by way of training and teaching. It is important to teach leaders how to share their faith in practical ways. I believe we learned about ourselves how the church has become complacent in the work we are called to. Idleness can ruin the creative inspiration in all of us, but we must look with the eyes and faith and vision to make evangelism a real possibility in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

Participants shared the importance of keeping the workshop simple, share current events, keep the introductions and the use of ice breakers. It was important to know what you know and show what you know. Do not look for opportunities to impress others but to help build relationships which leads to evangelism. Although I briefly mentioned the exit ticket in an earlier chapter, the exit ticket provided a brief glimpse of what happened in the workshop. Each participant was asked to fill out an exit ticket before they left the

workshop. The information from the exit ticket asked if the workshop left them feeling motivated, left the participant with questions, challenged the participant to grow, learned an interesting fact or created personal follow up. The participant was expected to circle one of the three options.

The next part of the exit ticket asked the participant to share what was interesting to them. Although this exit ticket was placed in their packet, I did not ask for the name to be included on the exit ticket. Here are the results in graph form.

Figure 2. Exit ticket respondents



All participants did not fill out an exit ticket for one reason or another unknown to me. The response was good, and it gave me a brief look in my presentation's effectiveness. The participant with 2% was remarkably interesting to me. At the end of the presentation, I could not address the questions he or she was left with. Although I may have a few ideas as to what questions, I wondered what the questions were pertaining to and how this person will seek the answer to the questions they have. I used this on the exit ticket looking for information. I will share a few comments from the exit ticket.

- I learned an interesting fact about:
 - I learned I need to make plans and think of new ideas.
 - I need to go into the community and help.
 - All the different functions of evangelism
 - Different ways to include younger children in the church
- My personal follow-up:
 - Find a way to reach more young adults
 - Allows me to go back and suggest more programs to engage the community
 - To be more productive, more open to learn what I do not know
 - To pray all year for the results we seek
 - Brainstorm for helpful ideas and strategies to engage the church

The categories shaped the way we each see things differently. It is important to note that proper training prevents poor performance. We learned that training clergy and laity working together can evangelize using the gift and graces provided by God. Layered in prayer can move the church in a direction of growth which comes through the sharing of one's faith.

The formula for evangelism in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is mathematics. Prayer plus teaching (instruction) plus training equals faith sharing. This leads to growth principles of pedology found in the organic growth. Although I found it to be growth at a slower pace, the exponential growth the New Testament experienced was without question life changing.

We can grow at a slow and steady pace, but we still grow. Seeking to awaken the spirit in the church is challenging. Not the Holy Spirit, we have extraordinarily little to do

with that, but the collective spirit of the body of Christ. Even though people left the room encouraged, excited, and ready to begin the work, the greatest challenge will be to keep the fire burning and create a safe and holistic place for continued conversation with open and honest dialogue.

I left this slide last because I think it speaks to the problem of have a quiet mouth. When we do not share the word of God, testify, and give our lives over to Christ, we will not be able to overcome. What does your church do well? Many of the participants discovered the church collective gifts of the church and the things that the church does well. Some participants have never thought about that question before. I shared an evangelism moment by saying: You cannot leave people where you found them.

I reminded the group of our responsibility to share our faith in very practical ways. For we are our brothers and sister keeper. We spent a few minutes talking about this encounter. We must seek to build relationships. That was my objective with Tony on several occasion as I sought him out at the BP gas station. Not that we are people fixers, but the participants learned to be faith sharers. As I stated earlier, what do you do well! I shared this statement it was truly relevant at and during the discussion. I said you may not be able to interact with certain personalities. But God has a person waiting on you to share your faith. I hope that once the conversation ends you and the person will become better people because of the conversation. Also, we do not have to re-invent ourselves to fit a certain ministry. God has gifted and prepared each of us for reaching people. As we ended, we ended with intentional prayer about our roles in the communities we serve. When I say the communities, we serve the reference is to the places we shop, live, and participate with other activities and not only the community where the church exists.

Bible Study

Although Bible study was exciting and focused on evangelism, I learned participants will not share their faith with anyone. While other participants will take the information shared with them to answer the call to greater ministry as clergy and laity. What really surprised me in the research were the non-participants who are a part of the context did not see the work as important enough for them to participate. This has helped me to work with those who would like to see the Church evangelize, share their faith, and grow. Really doing the work of the Lord which is found in the great commission (Matt. 28: 19-20).

Sermon Series

The sermons that had an evangelism hermeneutical lens was helpful to re-enforce the importance of Pleasant Hill need to evangelize. Because it came from the Bible, it will be well received. However, the Bible speaks on many other spiritual disciplines that are ignored and, in the past faith sharing, has been ignored or misapplied in the local church. I learned to continue to preach and teach the message even when it is not well received. I learned the importance of follow-up and the application of principles to assist with evangelism and church growth just as the text says in Luke 8:10 “He who have ears let them hear.”

Conclusion

A lot can be said about evangelism and faith sharing. I have put together a comprehensive project that will help any church grow. With my experience in the Christian Methodist Episcopal as a child, youth, young adult, and adult, from singing in the choir at Fews, to accepting a call to Christ in the same congregation, my passion for evangelism being birthed from failure of others. I found myself answering a call to preach and being blessed to serve as pastor, presiding elder, and general secretary but, most of all blessed to serve.

I had sought to answer the question why isn't the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church growing? My thesis is one layered in the reality of people, process, and procedure. Along the way to my conclusion, I have talked to several people who understand the dynamics of the church and they too are concerned about the future of the Church. For me, the Bible lays out the groundwork for evangelism. The chosen text of Luke 8:4-15 the parable of the sower shows that all seeds can grow, if given the right set of circumstances.

The Jesus was dealing with a model of dualism for my project. The seeds represented the word of God. The soil represented the heart of humanity. The explanation of growth can be found in the heart of humanity. The church I love has not taught people how to grow in the faith on a scale to impact the communities we serve. Calling for the church to revive itself must began with fervent prayer. History has shown in the biblical mandate for prayer found in the book of Acts of the Apostles found themselves in prayer and waiting on the Holy Spirit.

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